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Cultural diversity is part of the Australian story. From the distinct languages and beliefs of the Indigenous cultures that flourished on this land for thousands of years, to the legacy of migration that followed, this country has always been multicultural.

Diversity makes our community stronger. Migrants have always made a significant contribution to Victoria’s society, our economy and our global competitiveness, and will continue to do so. The creativity, skills, networks and entrepreneurial spirit of Victorians are key drivers of our State’s economy.

Without the waves of migration to Victoria and Australia over the past two centuries, we would not have the strong economy or the rich, diverse society that we treasure today. The benefits of migration are mutual. The skills, ingenuity and hard work of migrants have been integral to our nation building, and have stimulated economic growth. In turn our country has offered migrants unique opportunities to create new futures for themselves and their families in a stable democratic society.

The Victorian Government is proud of our cultural diversity, and has a strong reputation for harnessing and developing its many benefits. We are committed to developing education strategies to ensure that all Victorian children and young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to participate effectively as active and informed members of our globalised, multicultural society.

Victorian skills, cultural knowledge and linguistic expertise give our State a competitive edge in an increasingly globalised market. As a government, we support policies and programs that make the most of the opportunities presented to us by the cultural diversity of our society.

We have made international engagement a priority, through Government-led trade missions. These missions facilitate exports, attract investment, foster research and development partnerships, develop government-to-government relationships, and generally build on Victoria’s strong relationship with its regional neighbours. Our State is a centre for research and learning that draws students from around the world. Undoubtedly our reputation as an open and accepting society is a key part of this.

It is not the role of Government alone, but rather it is the shared responsibility of all Victorians to ensure we are a stable and welcoming society. We must all remain vigilant in our efforts to combat racism and discrimination whenever it occurs. For its part, the Victorian Government is committed to programs and policies that support the shared benefits of multiculturalism. The networks, languages and cross-cultural knowledge within our communities empower our State to make the most of its international influences and connections.

The task before us is to build upon our achievements, to overcome future challenges and to realise the benefits that our diversity delivers for us all.

The Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP
Premier
Victoria is one of the most culturally diverse and cohesive societies in the world, built on a rich and multifaceted cultural heritage. Our diversity is part of our past, present and future, and as Victorians we value and respect it. We also treasure our social harmony. Our unity in diversity makes our State such a great place to live, and draws admiration across the world. Our success is due in large part to the leadership in, and support for, multicultural affairs we have displayed for many years across both the community and government. This policy aims to maintain and build on this success.

Diversity defines us and underpins our identity as a community. We are also defined by the rights, responsibilities and values we share and uphold as citizens of this great State and nation. The opportunities offered to new migrants to settle and improve their lives will continue to benefit future generations. A successful multicultural society accepts that diversity is central to its future. We can see that our multicultural communities offer important connections to the rest of the world and make considerable contributions to future prosperity.

In our interconnected, global environment, our diversity can provide endless opportunities for enriching cultural, social, creative and economic exchanges. Victorians can be citizens of the world. How we manage our rich multicultural influences will shape the kind of society we leave for future generations. As globalisation and increasing mobility encourage unprecedented cultural, linguistic and religious exchange, Victoria’s attitudes, approaches and policies matter more than ever. Supporting our diverse communities is an investment in social cohesion.

This new policy re-affirms the Government’s commitment to promote a socially cohesive, multicultural society. It also outlines how the concept of citizenship ensures that diversity and unity are complementary. Citizenship affirms that we are unified by our commitment to our nation’s democratic institutions, laws and values, while recognising that all Australians benefit from our cultural and religious diversity. We are committed to implementing a robust and balanced multicultural policy that, alongside Australian citizenship, can lay the foundation for a strong and unified society, a society where discrimination and vilification against any Victorian is taken seriously, and dealt with according to the law.

This policy was developed after extensive community consultation and is built on a solid foundation of partnerships within the Victorian community. Our approach to cultural diversity is to invest in it as a growing asset for this State. Multiculturalism is not just about new migrants and refugees, but involves everyone who calls Victoria home. For many Victorians, interactions with people of different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds are a comfortable and natural part of our daily lives. The ease with which these interactions occur is testimony to the success of Victoria’s multiculturalism. The extent and way we interact and work with each other; our willingness to extend a helping hand and a warm welcome and to give everyone a fair go, regardless of their background, beliefs or appearance, will continue to determine how Victoria prospers into the future.

Hon. Nicholas Kotsiras MP
Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship
The Victorian Government’s Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Policy is important for all Victorians. The policy recognises that each of us plays a part in contributing to and shaping the future of our State, and that by valuing and embracing our diversity, we can continue to realise the benefits of a cohesive and multicultural society.

Ours is a State that we can all be proud of; a State that we can all contribute to; a State that welcomes new arrivals as contributors to the social, cultural and economic growth of our community. Cultural diversity underpins everything that makes us who we are as Victorians.

From the beginning, migration has stimulated and propelled Victoria’s economy and society and continues to do so. Without the contribution of successive waves of migrants, our State would not have experienced the development and prosperity we enjoy today. Nor would we be able to participate as effectively in the globalised economy.

Our diversity is an asset. It offers us unique, cosmopolitan insights that can help us to better understand and respond to global issues and trends. Cultural diversity improves our ability to see and connect with the world around us. This engagement will help us all to create and experience huge social and economic benefits from the dynamic global environment we live in today.

The Victorian approach to multiculturalism and citizenship is based on mutual benefits. Society as a whole benefits from migration that brings different skills, perspectives and knowledge that constantly renew our society. Migrants benefit from joining one of the world’s most stable democratic and open societies, and being able to participate in a strong and free economy.

The Victorian Government’s Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Policy:

- reaffirms the Government’s support for Victoria’s cultural, linguistic and religious diversity as a strength that provides benefits for all Victorians;
- builds upon the principles and values of multiculturalism and citizenship enshrined in the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011;
- recognises the importance of Victoria’s whole-of-Government approach to multicultural affairs and settlement as critical to achieve effective service delivery and outcomes;
- identifies the demographic changes, opportunities and challenges that Victoria needs to respond to continue to shape a positive future for our multicultural society;
- outlines the Government’s objectives and commitments to maximise the benefits of our diversity, promote citizenship, participation and social cohesion, and deliver accessible and responsive services to Victorians from diverse cultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds; and
- contains a set of indicators to better understand how Victoria is faring in multicultural affairs, citizenship and social cohesion, and to identify emerging trends and issues.

The first step towards developing this whole-of-government policy was The Government’s Vision for Citizenship in a Multicultural Victoria, a discussion paper released in September 2012. That document was the start of a broader conversation about the role of diversity within our State, and invited the public to share ideas on how we can continue to improve the Government’s role in supporting all Victorians.

The resulting policy is organised under three themes which are critical in fostering a fair, inclusive and harmonious multicultural Victoria:

- Maximising the benefits of our diversity;
- Citizenship, participation and social cohesion; and
- Accessible and responsive services.
Migration has long shaped societies across the world. Today is no different. With increased global mobility, most countries are experiencing an increase in their cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

How governments respond to diversity helps determine the future experience of living in those countries. If cultural diversity is nurtured, harnessed and respected, it can engender a more creative, productive and cohesive society. It can lead to a cosmopolitan society attuned and able to respond to the opportunities and challenges in a changing world. To ignore cultural diversity is to squander these opportunities. Government policy therefore has a pivotal role to play in supporting and managing our diversity to ensure shared prosperity and social cohesion.

Australia is recognised as being relatively successful in fostering social cohesion. Research comparing multicultural policies between nations has consistently rated Australia highly. Our nation’s approach to diversity has developed over time. Assimilation and integration policies eventually evolved towards a more nuanced, mutually beneficial approach to multicultural affairs as we know it today. Along this journey, government has played a leading role in shaping the core principles of multicultural policies across Australia.

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**GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP**

The Australian experience shows us that success in multicultural affairs requires government policy to:

> provide leadership;
> value diversity;
> foster and maintain unity; and
> address community needs and issues.

Leadership means bringing different sectors of society together, to find common ground and to articulate the shared aspirations and values that unite all Victorians. Social cohesion depends on our ability, as a society, to value the contribution of all Victorians and to accept cultural diversity as an integral part of life in our society.

Leadership is also important to articulate and defend these shared values whenever they are challenged. Multiculturalism, by its nature, prompts discussions of nationhood, change and cultural identity. This discussion is the very heart of democracy, and government policy has a clear role to play in encouraging and assisting a positive debate about multiculturalism, one that promotes the interests of society as a whole.

Government policy helps to define and affirm society’s positive values in relation to diversity which, in turn, can support social cohesion. In Victoria, Parliament enshrined these values in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.

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1 The Multiculturalism Policy Index (MIPEX), Queens University Canada monitors and compares multiculturalism in 31 western countries across 8 policy indicators.
IF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS NURTURED, HARNESSED AND RESPECTED, IT CAN ENGENDER A MORE CREATIVE, PRODUCTIVE AND COHESIVE SOCIETY

The Scanlon Foundation’s social cohesion report highlights that, while multiculturalism faces challenges, Victoria is relatively more cohesive than other states. Professor Markus, author of the report, identifies leadership, targeted programs and investments from across government as contributing to Victoria’s success.

Public commentators and leaders from all sectors in society have a responsibility to support our social cohesion. Leadership in the area of multicultural policy involves valuing unity in diversity and promoting informed commentary, to ensure that public debate remains enlightened and based on evidence.

Policies, services and programs need to be sensitive to the particular and changing needs of our diverse communities. This approach is not about differentiating one group of Victorians from others. Rather, it ensures that government can respond to all Victorians effectively. Efforts and investment need to be focussed on priority areas that Victorians identify as critical such as: the settlement of new arrivals; equitable access to services and vital information; and creating opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. In light of Victoria’s growing diversity, it is important that trends in all these areas be monitored to identify and respond to changing issues and needs.

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT WORKING TOGETHER

Each level of government – state, commonwealth and local – plays a complementary and collaborative role in promoting social inclusion, enhancing participation in civic society and making the most of the opportunities that cultural diversity brings.

The Commonwealth manages Australia’s migration program and is responsible for regulating settlement numbers and funding services to assist new migrants to settle in Australia. Its role has a significant impact on the diversity of Victoria’s population, and the level of support that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers receive when they arrive.

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

State Government sets policy directions and delivers programs and services that aim to provide social, cultural and economic benefits for all. The Victorian Government will continue to work closely with all levels of government to ensure that national policies and funding, as well as local services, deliver the best possible outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including newly arrived migrants. A needs-based, outcome-driven approach will deliver the best long term results.

IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMUNITY SECTOR

The community sector plays an important part in delivering effective services, fostering and supporting diversity, and promoting social cohesion. Government at all levels relies on, and needs to work closely with, the community sector. Ethno-specific, multicultural and faith-based organisations are critical in building strong, resilient communities.

Community sector organisations create opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in society, access services, and pursue education and employment opportunities. They provide vital assistance to those with the highest needs – new arrivals, young and older people – and provide pathways to mainstream services and links to government. Ethno-specific community organisations and self-help groups are also an important focus for volunteering, recreation and social activity, and help preserve cultural traditions and languages.

VICTORIA’S WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH
Victoria’s approach to multiculturalism is embedded within a whole-of-community and whole-of-Government framework (Figure 1) that has a strong legislative and policy basis. In order to meet the needs of one of the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse societies in the world, responsive services and programs – both universal and targeted – complement this approach.

**LEGISLATION**

The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* provides the framework for a whole-of-government approach, which recognises and values the cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria. The Act establishes the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) as a statutory authority to provide independent advice to the Victorian Government on multicultural affairs and citizenship matters. Reporting requirements under the Act, including the development of departmental cultural diversity plans, facilitate more targeted departmental responsiveness to the diversity of the community when delivering services and programs.³

Other important components of Victoria’s legislative framework include the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*, enacted to prohibit the vilification of people on the grounds of race or religious belief. There is also the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006*. These pieces of legislation demonstrate that the Victorian Government takes allegations of discrimination and vilification against any Victorian very seriously, and will ensure those responsible are held to account according to the law. Further details on relevant Victorian legislation see Appendix 2.


**POLICY**

In addition to this policy, the Victorian Government’s approach to multicultural affairs is informed by a range of policy and planning frameworks (see Appendix 2); policy frameworks that have evolved over decades of bipartisan support.

The Victorian Government’s *Vision for Languages Education* (2010) and the related implementation plan *Languages – expanding your world* aim to give all students the opportunity to learn another language and continue to improve Victoria’s multilingual capacity.

Dynamic financial and trade policies are also in place to secure Victoria’s economic future, and engagement with the rest of the world. These are strengthened through our language education policies, intercultural education initiatives, international students, trade and diplomatic ties, and most importantly through the connections of culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse Victorians.

The Government’s *Multicultural Communications Policy* and *Guidelines on Policy and Procedure on Interpreting and Translating* ensure that departments and agencies understand their obligations to provide information to communities in their language and that interpreters and translators are used when required to deliver services.
RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

The Victorian Government’s approach ensures services and programs are responsive to the needs of a linguistically, religiously and culturally diverse society. The service and program cycle comprises planning and delivery, monitoring and reporting, and community consultation and feedback (Figure 1).

The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* provides the framework for the whole-of-government approach. The Act requires all departments to report annually on their responsiveness to the diversity of the community when delivering their services and programs. The initiatives are compiled each year across all departments and a whole-of-government report is presented by the relevant Minister annually as required by the Act. The report is also the basis for state-wide community consultations conducted annually to gain community feedback on the government’s performance in multicultural affairs.

The reporting required under the Act includes progress made under each department’s cultural diversity plan for culturally sensitive service delivery. Cultural diversity plans help departments evaluate services and programs for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The plans include requirements to train staff to improve cultural competency skills, and to ensure communications are delivered in relevant community languages when necessary.

Figure 1: Victoria’s Whole-of-Government Approach
UNDERSTANDING VICTORIA’S GROWING DIVERSITY
KEY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

This section highlights the key demographic trends of Victoria’s growing diversity. These trends underpin the opportunities and challenges addressed by this policy. Victoria is home to one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world, and is also among the fastest-growing and most diverse populations in Australia. The 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing shows that, of the total Victorian population of 5,354,040 persons:

> 26.2% (1,405,330) were born overseas in over 200 countries (up from 23.8% in 2006);

> 46.8% (2,503,127) were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas (up from 43.6% in 2006);

> 23.1% (1,235,436) spoke 260 languages other than English at home (up from 20.4% in 2006); and

> 3,623,796 Victorians followed more than 130 different faiths (up from 3,374,700 in 2006).
PoPulATIon GrowTh from mIGrATIon

Over the past decade net overseas migration has consistently accounted for more than half of Victoria’s population increase (Graph 1) adding to the vibrancy of our multicultural society and economy. Victoria’s population is expected to grow from 5.73 million as at June 2014 to 6.46 million in June 2020. Net overseas migration is expected to directly contribute 59.1 per cent (435,003 persons) to this growth (735,737)4.

Net permanent migration to Victoria has been increasing over the last decade, except for a slight drop in 2009–2010. Skilled migrants have comprised the bulk of the migration intake followed by those who have settled through family reunion (Graph 2). Victoria has also received between 30–35 per cent of Australia’s total humanitarian intake. In the past ten years, Victoria has received 36,399 arrivals through the humanitarian stream.

DIVersITy GrowInG more rAPIDLY

The period between the 2006 and 2011 Censuses saw the fastest rates of growth in diversity over the past two decades. Given the present migration program, this rate of growth is projected to continue. Both the proportion of overseas-born Victorians, and those who have at least one parent born overseas, grew more rapidly between 2006 and 2011 than between previous Census periods (Graphs 3 and 4).

INCREASING LANGUAGE DIVERSITY
At the 2011 Census, over 1.2 million (or 23.1 per cent) Victorians spoke a language other than English (LOTE), at home compared to 20.4 per cent at the 2006 Census. The number of Victorians who speak another language increased steadily between 1991 and 2011 (Graph 5). The increase was greatest between 2006 and 2011.

There has also been an increasing diversity of languages spoken in Victoria due to the changing patterns and source countries of migration. Languages from Asia, Africa and the Middle East have experienced growth in the number of speakers, albeit growing from a smaller base.

CHANGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY
Victoria is also changing in religious diversity. The number of Victorians with a religion increased by 249,091 persons (7.4 per cent) between 2006 and 2011. While the various Christian faiths remain the largest, other faiths have experienced significant growth between the two censuses (Graph 6).
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
Between 2006 and 2011, there was an increase in the number of Victorians with limited English proficiency (Graph 7). Across almost all age groups, there was significant growth in the number of people who have low English proficiency.

AGEING COMMUNITIES
Victoria’s population from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has an older age profile than the general population. There is a higher proportion of people aged 60 years or over among Victorians born in countries where English is not the main language compared to all other Victorians (Graph 8). The proportion increased steadily between the 1991 and 2011 Census, from 19% to 27%. The number of Victorians aged 60 years or over, who were born in countries where English is not the main language, more than doubled between 1991 and 2011, from 137,496 to 286,486. This significant growth has implications for services, especially provision of interpreters, as this cohort has a relatively high proportion of people who have limited English proficiency.
WHERE CALD VICTORIANS LIVE

Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities are geographically well distributed, with more than 90% of people born in a country where English is not the main language living in metropolitan Melbourne (Graph 9). Growth areas have the highest number of people born in countries where English is not the main language, as these areas attract younger migrant families. New and emerging migrant groups also tend to relocate to these areas due to housing affordability.

While there are some concentrations of migrant groups in particular areas, including high numbers of refugee and asylum seeker arrivals in the South and North West metropolitan regions, overall there is relatively wide dispersal of culturally and linguistically diverse people throughout the State. Compared to other Australian capital cities, Melbourne has a better dispersal of migrants across the metropolitan area.

The benefits of cultural diversity in Victoria are not confined to major cities. A significant proportion of the Victorian CALD population also lives in smaller towns and rural areas across the State (Graph 9). Diversity is part of the cultural landscape of the whole State. The Victorian Government is keen to see new migrants and existing residents of diverse backgrounds continue to settle in regional Victoria.

Graph 9: Victorians born in countries where English is not the main language as Percentage of Local Government Area (LGA) Population, 2011
VICTORIA IS HOME TO ONE OF THE MOST CULTURALLY DIVERSE SOCIETIES IN THE WORLD, AND IS ALSO AMONG THE FASTEST-GROWING AND MOST DIVERSE POPULATIONS IN AUSTRALIA.
RESPONDING TO VICTORIA’S DIVERSITY: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES
As Victoria continues to grow and develop as a multicultural society, there are trends, challenges and opportunities that require considered responses by governments, as well as by the Victorian community as a whole. By working together all Victorians can help shape a positive future in this State.

OPPORTUNITIES FROM OUR DIVERSITY

Migration will continue to play a strong role in the development of our State. Migrants have brought, and continue to bring, unique skills, ideas and knowledge, which has fuelled creativity, innovation and development in our economy and society. Also, given that net migration into Australia favours people of prime working age, the continued arrival of migrants will assist Victoria to grow its workforce base, as well as help to offset the challenges of an ageing population. Diaspora networks are larger than ever, fostering international connections built on kinship, trust and language. These networks can facilitate business links and help to spread new ideas.5

A STRONG AND DIVERSE VICTORIA

Victorians support and appreciate the cultural diversity of our State. According to a University of Melbourne report6 for the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, acceptance of cultural diversity is high across Victoria, with over 89 per cent of Victorians supportive of different cultures in society. Social cohesion is also high compared to other parts of Australia. The findings of the Scanlon Foundation’s 2013 Mapping Social Cohesion survey indicate strong support for multiculturalism with 84 per cent agreeing it has been good for Australia, and 75 per cent agreeing it benefits Australia’s economic development.

It is important that the benefits of our cultural and linguistic diversity be fully understood and embraced by all Victorians. These benefits go far beyond the cultural delights, such as food and music brought by migrants over the years.

Victoria’s experience and reputation as a cohesive society that embraces diversity resonates internationally. Our stable democracy and liveability, coupled with our human and natural resources, developed infrastructure and services, helps to draw investment, encourage overseas trade, and attract skilled labour, international students and visitors.

HARNESSING OUR MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL POTENTIAL

Victoria continues to leverage its cultural and linguistic capital and overseas networks to grow local and international markets and tourism. By harnessing Victoria’s vast linguistic resources, by expanding the teaching of languages and using the linguistic expertise of our migrant communities, we can better engage locally, regionally and internationally. Furthermore, Australia and Victoria need to equip our students with the knowledge and understanding of the nations in Asia, not only because they are our nearest neighbours, but because many of their citizens have made their homes here.

The global, social, economic and political networks established by migrant communities help build the capacity of both their birth countries and Victoria. Victoria and Australia are showcased as a welcoming, democratic and multicultural society through migrants’ networks across the world.

5 “Weaving the World Together & The Magic of Diasporas.” The Economist, 19 November 2011
Victoria also benefits from the entrepreneurial spirit of migrants. Small and medium enterprises have the potential to establish and facilitate international trade, investment and commercial opportunities, as well as strengthen Australia’s bilateral relationships with other countries and regions.

ENCOURAGING FULL PARTICIPATION

Victoria continues to encourage migrants to participate fully in all aspects of life. This engagement aids their successful settlement, and helps all Victorians to benefit from the skills, talents and culture that new people bring to our community. Our education and employment sectors, our volunteering centres and our culture itself stand to benefit from the worldly influence of those who have come from elsewhere to make Victoria their home.

Many second generation (Australian-born) Victorians have benefited from Victoria’s world-class education system and job opportunities. They have built on their parents’ hard work as new migrants to become highly educated professionals. For example, research\(^7\) shows that over the long term, second generation humanitarian entrants contribute more significantly to the labour force than the first generation. Humanitarian entrants in general place a high value on education for their young, leading to high labour force participation. Many children of today’s new migrants will contribute positively to Victoria’s economic, social and cultural future.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Victoria’s continued success as a diverse and cohesive community depends on the opportunities people who migrate here have to participate in and contribute to society – and the assistance that is provided to address disadvantage whenever it occurs. Opportunities to learn English, undertake an education, gain employment, start a business and participate in civic society are all vital in maintaining the engaged, cohesive society we have in Victoria. By providing these opportunities and assisting those who need help, isolation and marginalisation can be prevented, giving everyone the chance to fully contribute to society.

NEW ARRIVALS – SETTLEMENT NEEDS

Patterns of migration indicate that the range of source countries for new migrants has increased and therefore our diversity is greater than ever before. Geographically too, increasing numbers of migrants are settling in areas such as outer Melbourne and regional Victoria, which have not been sites for large migrant settlement in the past. As the diversity of regional areas grow, appropriate support services and infrastructure will be required to ensure a successful transition and to support strong social cohesion.

While people from refugee backgrounds do require initial support to help them settle in Australia, there is no evidence to suggest they impose a net cost to Australia in the long term. In fact, over time, refugees, like other migrants, tend to make positive social and economic contributions to their adopted countries\(^8\).

Supporting humanitarian entrants to fully participate in Victorian life – to learn English, undertake meaningful work or activity, enrol in kindergarten or school, establish networks and engage in the various service systems – is critical to ensure settlement success.

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\(^7\) Assessing the economic contribution of refugees in Australia, Richard Parsons, Multicultural Development Association, 2013.

With timely, holistic and needs-based support, individuals and families from humanitarian backgrounds, including refugees and asylum seekers who have fled persecution and, in many cases, survived trauma and loss, can begin to rebuild their lives and flourish in their new homeland.

Providing a coordinated, responsive service system for new and established communities alike, while ensuring support is culturally appropriate and accessible, will enable government, business and society as a whole to reap the social, cultural, civic and economic benefits of a multicultural Victoria. Coordinating between the three tiers of government, the community and the business sector is essential to ensure responses are appropriate and effective.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE
Young people, aged 15–29, represent 21 per cent of Victorians born in countries where English is not the main language are an important part of our future. By aiding the development of our youth, Victoria will benefit from their leadership potential, as well as strengthening social cohesion and community harmony for future generations. Encouraging youth oriented programs and initiatives, for example, to actively involve young people who are refugees or newly arrived to Australia, will help ensure that they build rapport with their new community, and find pathways to education and employment.

Intergenerational conflict, as well as torture and trauma experiences, can make it difficult for some newly arrived youth to find a voice and a place to belong. Young adulthood is often a difficult period. Add to it the challenges of settling into a new home, learning a new language, and adapting to a new culture with the different social structures, and it becomes even more difficult. Community role models and resources can assist young people to better manage these issues. Innovative and inclusive policies and programs to support young people, within their families, will help them to take positive pathways to fulfil their potential and better contribute to the broader community.

AGEING MIGRANTS
Migrants who settled in Australia in the period following the Second World War have been an important part of our nation building. Many came here as young adults or children and are now entering, or have reached, older age. The contribution of post-war migrants who brought their skills, ideas and entrepreneurship to Victoria, has helped to power the economic and social development we enjoy today. As net contributors to Victoria, ageing migrants should now expect access to quality services and support when they need them.

Victorian communities from non-English speaking backgrounds have an older age profile than the general population. The ageing of these communities underlines the need for health, aged care and community services to be responsive to diverse cultural, faith and language needs. This means access to language services, and assistance to live independently and remain connected to families, friends and the broader community.

DIVERSE LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL NEEDS
Low English language proficiency and literacy skills directly affect a person’s ability to access services and information. Addressing language and literacy needs through English language tuition as well as by providing interpreters and translators, is crucial to ensure access to, and the effective delivery of, government services. There is also increasing demand for language services to cater to a greater range of languages that support new and emerging communities. Language support is also required for established and ageing communities.
PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS

Although everyone has the same rights, people with a disability are at a greater risk of experiencing disadvantage and discrimination. People with a disability have many common issues, but each person is different. Individual circumstances, such as impairment type and complexity, stage of life, gender, culture and Aboriginality mean that people with a disability encounter different types and levels of barriers to participation, which can interact and change over time. People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are slightly more likely to have a disability than other Victorians (22 per cent compared with 18 per cent in the general population).10

The Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016 works to provide mainstream and specialist services across government that are flexible, tailored to individual needs and culturally responsive.

TACKLING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

The experience of racism can have a significant adverse impact on one’s sense of belonging and acceptance and also on individual mental health and community wellbeing.9

A sense of belonging and acceptance is fundamentally important to personal and community wellbeing. For newly arrived migrants in particular, being accepted as part of the community is essential to their successful settlement and social inclusion. It is also essential for social cohesion across the wider society.

The Scanlon Report 2013 showed that while the sense of belonging with Australia was relatively high at 92 per cent, there was also a marked increase in the proportion that had experienced some form of discrimination, from 12 per cent in 2012 to 19 per cent in 2013.

While the Victorian community is, on the whole, a harmonious one and the vast majority of Victorians value and support the multicultural composition of our society, we must remain vigilant in combating racism and discrimination when it occurs.

Victoria has a strong legislative framework which guards against racism and discrimination. Government policy and practice also aim to ensure that all citizens – irrespective of their national, ethnic, religious or linguistic background – are subject to fair and equitable treatment under the law. Through positive action, programs, policies and public statements the Government will continue to stand firm against any racism that may emerge within the Victorian community.


10 Victorian Department of Human Services, 2010.
This policy contains a set of indicators which together provide a picture on how Victoria is faring in the support of multiculturalism, citizenship and social cohesion. The inclusion of indicators is a step forward in Victoria’s policy on multicultural affairs and citizenship as it will better enable progress to be monitored and issues to be identified.

Collecting and reporting on indicator data will assist government and communities to better identify trends and emerging issues within the sector. The indicators presented in this policy will be monitored and reported, where appropriate, in future whole-of-government reporting and will help provide a more comprehensive picture of progress in multicultural affairs and citizenship.

The indicators are not intended to measure the performance of particular government services or programs. Population outcomes often straddle multiple policy areas and levels of government, and cannot often be attributed to specific programs or interventions. The indicators therefore should not be read as indicators of program performance, but rather as a means through which trends can be identified and analysed over time.

A full set of indicators is provided in Appendix 1. The data sources for the indicators define culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Victorians in a number of ways, including by:

- country of birth;
- language background; and
- self-identification.

Indicators based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data can, in most instances, be disaggregated by age, sex, locality, country of birth and language spoken at home.

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11 Under the Multicultural Victoria Act (2011), government departments and agencies report annually on their activities in multicultural affairs and citizenship through a whole-of-government reporting process.
MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS OF OUR DIVERSITY
VALUING OUR MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Whether people have come to Victoria by choice or out of necessity, they all make a significant contribution to our society, its culture, its economy and its global competitiveness. Migrants and new arrivals bring new skills, ideas and connections that add value to our workforce, industries and business. They also contribute to our multicultural society by sharing their rich cultural traditions, languages and religious heritage with the broader community. These influences shape the cosmopolitan character of our State and make Victoria – and Victorians – more resilient and adaptable to an increasingly dynamic and interconnected global community.

By investing in diversity we will continue to encourage creativity and innovation, to grow our economy and to strengthen our multicultural society.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Migration, including through family reunion, skilled migration or humanitarian programs, has brought valuable skills, business and investment into Victoria, aiding in the creation of an innovative and dynamic workforce. Renowned international commentators12 have acknowledged the importance of immigration in strengthening human capital by attracting the talent required to gain a competitive advantage in a globalised market.

Migration continues to supply a steady stream of talented and innovative people who help Victoria and Australia make the most of an increasingly dynamic and interconnected national and global economy. New perspectives and skills fuel innovation, stimulate investment and generate economic growth. Victoria’s multicultural society also contributes to our standing as a leading provider of education and training to international students.

12 For example Mr Rupert Murdoch AC address for the 2013 Annual Lowy Lecture.

OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES

To maximise the benefits of our diversity we will:

> Promote and celebrate the benefits of our multicultural society with all Victorians.
> Build Victoria’s international reputation as a cosmopolitan, vibrant and welcoming multicultural and multifaith society.
> Enhance Victoria’s economy by leveraging our multilingual and multicultural capacity for international engagement and trade.
> Assist the education, tourism, artistic and knowledge industries by utilising Victoria’s cultural diversity.
> Ensure that Victoria’s education system develops the language skills, intercultural and interreligious understanding of all young people.
The world is witnessing a transition of economic and political influence towards the economies of the Asia-Pacific region. The emerging economies of Asia, in particular, are transforming into a global hub for trade, investment and the movement of people, information and knowledge.

For Victoria, this transformation is occurring on our doorstep, and presents exciting opportunities for Victorian businesses, and the community more broadly, to engage in new partnerships within our region through trade, education or the arts, and through major investment areas such as agriculture as well as research and development.

It is only through concerted efforts to build long-term, sustainable relationships with key partners in these countries that Victoria can hope to realise these opportunities. It is for this reason that the Victorian Government is committed to a long-term international engagement agenda to build ties with key partners across the globe, in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

The Victorian Government is committed to a comprehensive approach to international engagement that is characterised by:

> Social, cultural and educational engagement developing long-term, sustainable international relationships and engagement through activities that build mutual understanding of one another’s cultures and social customs.

> Economic engagement building partnerships and seizing opportunities to enhance international trade and business activities that support Victoria’s economic growth and job creation.

> Government-to-government engagement harnessing the collaborations between the Victorian Government and other key institutions, such as governments, sister city/state relations and universities.
Victoria’s diverse multicultural community is an important component in the Victorian Government’s international engagement agenda, acting as a bridge between our state and the many countries of origin that Victorians once called home. The networks, languages and cross-cultural knowledge of our diverse communities enable our State to make the most of its international influence.

Equally, businesses can avail themselves of Victoria’s multilingual, multicultural workforce which is critical to build new relationships, capture new markets, and adopt an international outlook. Intercultural understanding and foreign language proficiency are examples of skills that will serve all Victorians living in an increasingly global context.

The Victorian Government will continue to identify, promote and extend the many benefits of our multicultural society to build a healthy economy. Our future demands that we also invest in our young people’s education to develop their language, knowledge and leadership skills, so they too can contribute to our growing engagement with the rest of the world.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS

Our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity has long played a distinctive role in the character of life in our State, contributing to the vibrancy of our society and our collective prosperity. Cultural diversity makes us what we are and who we are as Victorians. Apart from Indigenous Victorians, we – or our ancestors – all came from somewhere else to start a new life in Victoria, bringing our skills, energy and culture to enrich the State.

Our cities and towns reflect the legacy of migration that helped them grow. Our State’s cultural and religious infrastructure, our buildings and cultural precincts draw from a rich variety of artistic and architectural expressions. This heritage contributes to Victoria’s identity, its liveability and its attractiveness as a world class destination for education, tourism and business activities.

Our diverse social and cultural landscapes are increasingly important as Melbourne and Victoria compete with other cities and states to attract international and domestic tourists, international students, and international trade links.

Coordinated investment and planning between Government, local communities and councils, to enhance our streetscapes, cultural precincts, public art and entertainment spaces serves the broader community by contributing to Victoria’s economy, and improving our social and cultural life.

Multicultural influences on the creative arts benefit all Victorians. Victoria has earned a strong international reputation as a leading cultural destination, with a vibrant and accessible multicultural arts scene. The Victorian Government’s investment in major and community arts institutions and organisations is an important means of attracting business and tourism to the State, and strengthens Victoria’s ongoing position as a dynamic and cosmopolitan place to live, work and invest.

Through a range of programs and initiatives the Government supports Victoria’s many diverse communities to promote and share their unique cultural identities with the broader Victorian community, in a spirit of openness, inclusiveness and goodwill. This reflects the important role multicultural arts plays in building understanding, respect and acceptance of difference across Victorian society, by creating opportunities to celebrate and experience the cultures and traditions of others.
OUR COMMITMENT

The Victorian Government will:

> Showcase and celebrate Victoria’s cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, including through Cultural Diversity Week and by supporting community festivals and events.
> Support the creation of vibrant and visible multicultural events and places by investing in public expressions of cultural heritage, art and performance.
> Build on Victoria’s open, cosmopolitan and vibrant reputation, and Melbourne’s world’s most liveable city status, to attract investment as well as a diverse range of intellectual, business and artistic talents and skills.
> Enhance international engagement strategies, including trade missions, to deepen Victoria’s connections with the rest of the world.
> Encourage and support businesses to use Victoria’s multilingual, multicultural networks and workforce to capture new markets, build new relationships and give businesses an international outlook.
> Support and harness the State’s cultural, linguistic and religious diversity to:
  > promote Victoria as an attractive destination for international students; and
  > promote our tourism industry.
> Build the strength of the Victorian economy and address skill shortages through the skilled migration program.
> Increase skilled migrants’ access to jobs and employment and recruitment networks.
> Support our culturally diverse small business community to network and contribute to strengthening Victoria’s international trade links.
> Invest in the expansion of language education programs in Victoria.
> Make diversity and intercultural understanding central to the school curriculum so students can develop the knowledge and skills to participate as active and informed citizens locally, nationally and internationally.

INDICATORS TO TRACK OUR PROGRESS*

We will track how Victoria is faring in maximising the benefits of our diversity by monitoring how CALD Victorians are progressing in the following areas:

> Year 12 or equivalent qualification completion;
> tertiary institution attendance; and
> self-employment.

We will also monitor the rates of:

> international visitors to Victoria;
> international students studying in Victoria;
> skilled migrants working in their nominated field;
> students in Victorian government schools learning languages; and
> Victorian government schools providing a language program.

* These indicators are not intended to measure the performance of particular government services or programs. This data will assist government and communities to better identify trends and emerging issues within the sector.
CITIZENSHIP,
PARTICIPATION
AND SOCIAL
COHESION
RECOGNISING OUR COMMON VALUES AND
GOALS, AND OUR COMMON DEDICATION TO FAMILY,
FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY, DRAWS US TOGETHER
AS ONE PRODUCTIVE AND COHESIVE SOCIETY

THE FOUNDATION
OF OUR MULTICULTURAL
SOCIETY

Many migrants have chosen to make Victoria their home because they value the principles, rights and responsibilities of a democratic society and are attracted by the harmonious, multicultural and multifaith nature of our State. They have in turn made an enormous contribution to Victoria’s productivity, wealth and liveability. They have embraced and helped shape our democratic traditions and civic institutions.

The continued success of our multicultural society depends on the ability of all Victorians to actively exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens and to participate in civic life.

Our success also depends on how we unite over what we have in common: how we relate to each other and how we support and value each other.

Just as all Victorians are entitled to enjoy a peaceful and cohesive society, so too are all Victorians responsible for doing their part to uphold this right. Victorians share many aspirations relating to education, health, safety and prosperity. Moreover, we are united by a common dedication to and respect for our democratic institutions. Recognising our common values and goals, and our common dedication to family, friends and community, draws us together as one productive and cohesive society.

IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship has a number of meanings. On one level, it means that an individual is a citizen of this country as defined by the Australian Citizenship Act 2007. Citizenship is often seen as relevant only to migrants who have chosen to become Australian citizens. However, citizenship also relates to the civic values of our society; values that are about all of us. This interpretation of citizenship is important in ensuring that we live together in peace and harmony, engage with the community and have a strong sense of commitment to Australia; while we continue to express and respect our different cultural, linguistic and religious identities. Whether Victorians are new or temporary migrants, international students, temporary skilled migrants, or whether their forebears have been living in this State for generations, we all have rights and responsibilities as members of our society. In this sense, everyone living in our State is a citizen of Victoria. Citizenship recognises that Victorians, regardless of nationality or cultural origin or religious background:

- are united in their commitment to shared democratic values, laws and institutions and have a responsibility to abide by these;
- have a collective responsibility to work together for our common welfare and future;
- are entitled to mutual respect and understanding; and
- have the right to access opportunities to participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State.
Our social cohesion relies on all Victorians being recognised as important contributors to life in this State, whether they have formal Australian citizenship or not. Social cohesion depends on one’s sense of belonging and acceptance, and how a society’s citizens identify with, respect and actively support its democratic values, laws and institutions.

PARTICIPATION FOR ALL

All Victorians, regardless of background, are entitled to access opportunities to participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State. All Victorians should be enabled, empowered and encouraged to participate in society. This engagement may occur through formal channels, such as civic or political activities, voting or membership in political parties and organisations. Engagement may also be exercised through less formal channels, such as involvement in ethnic or community organisations, sports or social clubs. Participation through all these activities benefit our broader society.

Our social cohesion relies on all Victorians from different backgrounds contribute to society in many ways – through community service, volunteering, as members and officials of clubs and community organisations, in government and business as well as through arts and cultural activities, education and work. Strengthening the capacity of all Victorians to be active contributors to society will ensure that Victoria continues to prosper.

SOCIAL COHESION

Australia and Victoria have never been more culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse than today. As our diversity grows, our approach to community harmony and social cohesion is increasingly important in realising the full potential of our multicultural society. Our diversity can create a resilient community which adapts and thrives in response to challenges and opportunities.

OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES

To strengthen social cohesion and encourage all Victorians to formally engage with and feel part of the broader community we will:

- Support the continued contribution of all communities to the thriving multicultural, arts and creative life of Victoria.
- Strengthen all Victorians’ understanding of our differences and similarities, and appreciation for the social, cultural and economic benefits of our diversity.
- Ensure that all Victorians can express their own unique cultural and religious identity with dignity, confidence and safety.
- Emphasise the shared rights and responsibilities of all Victorians.
- Invest in our young people and community leaders as custodians of Victoria’s future harmony.
- Support and strengthen the capacity of newly arrived communities to fully participate in Victorian society as engaged and informed citizens.
People from refugee backgrounds

Humanitarian arrivals, like anybody settling in a new country, overwhelmingly express a desire and readiness to participate – in their neighbourhood, their school community, in the workforce – as a way to connect and belong. The civic and social contributions of Victoria’s refugee communities are vast and perhaps best highlighted in the significant volunteer hours committed to assisting others with their settlement needs.

While the primary responsibility for providing settlement support rests with the Commonwealth Government, the State plays a significant role in ensuring the full participation of newly arrived communities in all aspects of Victorian life.

Victoria supports a range of initiatives to assist people from a refugee background to actively engage with the wider Victorian community, and facilitate continued and meaningful opportunities to contribute in economically, as well as socially. This includes programs to build leadership and self-determination, as well as to increase access to mainstream services, including health care, early childhood services, schools, and employment.

Providing humanitarian arrivals with timely, coordinated support requires the Commonwealth – together with state and local governments – to respond in a needs-based and client-centred manner, to meet changing needs and concerns.

Addressing particular needs

Opportunities to participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State as fully as possible are especially critical for people experiencing multifaceted barriers to inclusion and those at risk of becoming isolated or alienated. Humanitarian arrivals, ageing Victorians, people with low English language proficiency, vulnerable youth and women are among this group.

Every Victorian offers their own set of attributes, skills and experiences, which can and do contribute to the prosperity of Victoria in a myriad of ways. This contribution is made across all sectors and industries, in our global interactions, and in attracting new investment. It is vital that all Victorians feel part of our community, are provided with the opportunity to contribute what they have to offer, and feel confident in doing so.

A harmonious, well-functioning multicultural society requires a genuine appreciation of each other’s differences – our different birthplaces, languages and ancestries; our life journeys and experiences; the beliefs and customs we hold dear – and what we can all contribute to Victoria. Essential to capitalising on the benefits our diversity offers is our ability to both embrace this diversity as a strength and to maintain community harmony, by addressing challenges such as discrimination, racism, disengagement and isolation.

All Victorians have a role in taking a stand against discriminatory and anti-social attitudes, to ensure that Victoria remains inclusive and a great place to live.
The Wisdom of Ageing Migrants

It is important that we provide opportunities for all senior Victorians to remain productive members of the Victorian community, and to participate in society to the extent they wish to – now and into the future. Linking seniors who have little or no English language proficiency with community programs, volunteering opportunities and social activities is of benefit not only in terms of their personal wellbeing, but because it provides other Victorians, including new arrivals, with the opportunity to draw upon this cohort’s experiences, skills and knowledge.

Of course, many older Victorians from migrant backgrounds are strongly connected to their local and wider cultural communities, providing critical support to their peers and communities through their volunteer contributions. This includes the operation of Victoria’s many multicultural seniors’ organisations. Our ageing population offers a wealth of experience in a range of sectors, from business to community services, and has strong connections to local and international communities. These senior Victorians are also an important repository of Victoria’s migration story and custodians of the many cultures, traditions and languages of Victorians.

Positive Futures for Young People

Victoria’s population of young migrants has a great deal to contribute to our society and economy. Young people (aged up to 25 years) represent the largest cohort of humanitarian arrivals. These young people bring hope and enthusiasm for their life in Victoria, but can also face significant barriers to participation.

Some young people from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds experience significant systemic barriers to full civic and economic participation and are – for a range of complex reasons – disproportionately disengaged from mainstream education, training and employment.

A whole-of-Government and community approach to support vulnerable young Victorians is therefore vitally important. A comprehensive early intervention approach that is outcome-oriented and maximises young people’s engagement with schools, education and training is critical. This will ensure that the social and economic contributions of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are realised, and will assist in addressing issues of social isolation and disengagement.

The Victorian Government recognises that young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds may require additional support to actively participate in community life and to develop their leadership capabilities. The Victorian Government will continue to support programs that assist these young people to access necessary services and achieve their full potential.

Across the Victorian Government, there are complex and innovative approaches in place to meet the needs of our children and young people. By helping to formally engage children and young people through initiatives that combat prejudice and racism, such as anti-bullying initiatives, culturally inclusive curriculum and teaching strategies, as well as civics and citizenship education, we can ensure that children and young people are equipped for life in a multicultural society.
OUR COMMITMENT

The Victorian Government will:

> Build understanding and respect by enabling communities to come together in events across Victoria that celebrate our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.
> Support cross-cultural and multifaith interactions and partnerships that strengthen connections across diverse communities and perspectives.
> Build strong, sustainable and representative community organisations that engage broadly with others and respond to challenges and opportunities.
> Work with multicultural service providers and peak associations to better understand and respond to the needs of our diverse communities, including our young people, newly arrived and ageing populations.
> Gather data on the prevalence and experience of racism and discrimination in Victoria and support appropriate responses.
> Support and listen to the concerns and aspirations of our diverse communities.
> Build the long-term literacy and numeracy skills of our migrant and refugee children and young people.
> Continue to support initiatives that assist our diverse communities, including young people, new arrivals and older Victorians of all backgrounds, to contribute to and participate in community life.
> Deliver information to:
  > build trust between new communities and government agencies;
  > assist communities to access services independently; and
  > assist new arrivals to understand the rights and responsibilities enjoyed by all Victorians.
> Coordinate programs and policies across the three levels of government to better enable new arrivals from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds to access mainstream service systems and fully participate in the life of Victoria.
We will track how Victoria is faring in citizenship, participation and social cohesion by monitoring how CALD Victorians are progressing in these areas:

> volunteering;
> membership of organised groups; and
> membership of Government Boards, Authorities and Committees.

We will also monitor Victorians' views on:

> whether multiculturalism makes life better in their area;
> the number of immigrants accepted into Australia; and
> whether accepting immigrants from different countries makes Australia stronger.

As well, we will also monitor the rate of complaints to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission:

> under the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*; and
> relating to discrimination based on race or religious belief under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

* These indicators are not intended to measure the performance of particular government services or programs. This data will assist government and communities to better identify trends and emerging issues within the sector.
ACCESSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES
EQUITY WITHIN OUR MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

As the diversity of our population continues to increase, our services need to be accessible and responsive to the community. All Victorians, regardless of cultural, linguistic or religious background, should have equitable and easy access to government and community services. Ensuring equality of access will deliver better outcomes, including enhanced participation in community activities and opportunities for people to form business links and personal relationships across the community. In turn, this will increase individual and community wellbeing and reduce reliance on services in the longer term.

From early childhood services through to education, employment, health, justice and transport, every citizen, regardless of background, should expect the very best from their government.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to government services that are sensitive to, and respect cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. Key tools, where appropriate include:

> the use of interpreters;
> providing translated information in an accessible manner, including through multicultural media channels;
> supporting cultural competency across the Victorian Government and broader workforce; and
> addressing barriers such as discrimination.

The Victorian Government is committed to addressing discrimination. Discrimination limits access to opportunities and services. It also adversely affects outcomes in education, employment, housing, justice and health, and leads to further exclusion and disadvantage.

OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES

To strengthen the accessibility and responsiveness of our service system we will:

> Ensure that cultural, linguistic and faith diversity is integral to the planning, delivery and evaluation processes of departments and service providers.
> Provide access to information and services that address the diverse language, cultural and faith needs of the Victorian community.
> Support the provision of language services for Victorians who need assistance with English when using government services.
> Promote a service system that is fair and free from racial and religious discrimination and vilification.
> Address the particular needs of and new and emerging communities, young people and ageing migrants.
RESPONSIVE SERVICES

The Victorian Government supports two broad, complementary approaches to providing a responsive, first-class service system that meets the needs of our diverse community:

> fostering cultural competence across government and mainstream services, by ensuring staff are properly trained to be culturally responsive, and to use interpreters and translators effectively; and

> where appropriate, supporting the delivery of services through, or in partnership with, ethno-specific and multicultural organisations.

Responsiveness in service delivery also means being aware of, and addressing, discrimination and racism in all its forms. While the vast majority of Victorians reject discrimination, racism and vilification, service providers must always be alert and prepared to address discrimination whenever it may emerge.

Figure 2: Cultural Diversity Planning Cycle

CULTURAL DIVERSITY PLANNING

The Victorian Government supports the development and use of cultural diversity plans as a systematic way to respond to the needs of a diverse community. Cultural diversity planning encourages continuous improvement by departments and agencies in providing accessible, responsive services that deliver intended outcomes (Figure 2).

Cultural diversity plans help to:

> ensure that information on services is readily available to non-English speaking communities;

> train employees to be culturally competent, including the effective use of interpreters and translators; and

> engage community stakeholders in the development and evaluation of policies, programs and services which will affect them.

The cultural diversity planning process provides valuable information, not only to improve performance within individual departments and agencies, but also at a system level. The Victorian Government will streamline and strengthen linkages between cultural diversity planning and existing whole-of-government processes including annual reporting and community consultations, and key inter-departmental bodies.

Furthermore, services can better meet the needs of all people if government departments and agencies ensure that staff, as well as appointees to government boards and committees, are reflective of the State’s diversity.
LANGUAGE SERVICES

The ability to speak English proficiently affects access to information and government services. It can also adversely affect government service delivery outcomes. A major aspect of ensuring the cultural responsiveness of agencies and staff is to provide people with low English proficiency levels access to professional language services, including interpreters and translators.

The number of Victorians with low English proficiency increased between 2006 and 2011. This increase reflects the influx of new migrants, such as people from a refugee background, as well as those who come for family reunion.

The Victorian Government will continue to encourage new migrants to attain a level of English proficiency through English as an additional language (EAL) support, and continue to advocate for increased Commonwealth support. It recognises that EAL learners are diverse and have varying literacy skills which will require a diversity of responses from educational providers.

The Victorian Government also provides a range of translated materials across many areas in various community languages, and will continue to work to ensure this information is readily accessible including on the internet and through ethno-specific and community media.

ROLE OF ETHNO-SPECIFIC AND MULTICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Ethno-specific and multicultural organisations play important roles in supporting service delivery to Victorians. Adequately supported ethno-specific and multicultural organisations are an important part of a comprehensive service delivery sector, providing culturally and linguistically appropriate support to Victorians, and complementing mainstream organisations. They are also the first port of call for many Victorians, providing a critical link to mainstream services, and assisting government through the creation of local community capacity, which can help to reduce reliance on government funded services.

Ethno-specific and multicultural organisations also assist governments to provide its own services in an appropriate and targeted manner. Governments rely on the detailed knowledge and local connections of ethno-specific and multicultural organisations to understand and respond to a wide range of emerging needs across Victoria’s diverse population.
ADDRESSING PARTICULAR NEEDS

ENSURING SUCCESS FOR OUR NEW AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES

While Victoria benefits from our growing diversity in innumerable ways, the complex needs and growing number of people settling from humanitarian backgrounds also pose challenges for existing service systems, particularly in metropolitan growth corridors and across regional Victoria.

The needs of communities from refugee backgrounds are often complex and include experiences of torture and trauma, complicated health and mental health issues, single parent households and disrupted schooling. As such, responses to refugee communities’ needs must be met in a holistic, coordinated manner.

The Commonwealth has primary responsibility for humanitarian settlement, and is largely responsible for funding settlement support in the first five years of arrival. It is therefore critical that Victoria continues to influence the Commonwealth to deliver accessible, timely and culturally appropriate settlement support for new arrivals across our State.

To capitalise on the settlement success of Victoria’s humanitarian communities, it is important that all three levels of government, together with the community and ethno-specific sector, work together to provide targeted settlement programs for humanitarian entrants across a range of health, education, employment and other key areas to ensure that specific needs are addressed.

It is equally important that Victoria equips mainstream services and organisations across the State with the skills and knowledge to best respond to the diverse and changing needs of humanitarian communities, thereby ensuring community independence, resilience and sustainability.

OLDER PEOPLE

The Victorian Government recognises that Victoria’s multicultural population is ageing at a significant rate, and that older Victorians from migrant backgrounds will require targeted support to access services and information that will assist them to remain healthy, independent and engaged with their community.

Appropriate language service provision, such as access to interpreters in health care settings, is vital. Older migrants may revert to their first language as their health declines, which will increase the demand for interpreters, bilingual workers and for relevant information to be provided in community languages.

The Victorian Government recognises the important role of ethno-specific and multicultural agencies in providing health and aged care services and information to older migrants, while also assisting them to live independently in the community. These agencies are also important sources of information to government on how to better target services.

DISABILITY

The Victorian Government recognises that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have a disability can face additional barriers to participation and inclusion, such as those created by language and cultural factors, as well as community attitudes. The Victorian Government will continue to deliver culturally responsive mainstream and specialist services that meet the differing needs of all people with disability, including access to information in community languages and interpreter services.
Our commitment

The Victorian Government will:

> Promote Cultural Diversity Planning to achieve continuous improvement by departments and agencies in delivering accessible and responsive services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
> Improve support for Cultural Diversity Planning by providing whole-of-government guidelines to assist departments and agencies to develop, implement and review their plans.
> Strengthen the link between community engagement, cultural diversity planning and whole-of-government annual reporting to better identify and address systemic issues to improve service accessibility, responsiveness and outcomes.
> Assist government staff and agencies to improve and maintain their cultural competence and provide inclusive services through training and organisational practices.
> Invest in the provision of interpreters and translators to assist people with low English proficiency to access government information and service, which includes developing guidelines on encouraging the use of interpreters and translators.
> Work with industry and communities, to improve the supply of interpreters and translators for people with low English language proficiency who use government services.
> Provide a range of translated information on government services and programs in relevant community languages, including on government websites.
> Deliver targeted programs for Victorians who may require specific assistance to access mainstream services and government information, including individuals from refugee backgrounds, members of diverse faith groups, older Victorians, people with low English language proficiency and people who have a disability.
> Promote active partnerships with ethno-specific and multicultural organisations, wherever relevant, to support improved service delivery to Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
> Foster recruitment practices across the public sector to help ensure workforce profiles better reflect the diversity in the community.
> Tackle discrimination and racism in all its forms to ensure fair access to government services.
> Improve the capacity of migrants and refugees to access the justice system.
> Assist Victorians with migrant and refugee backgrounds to achieve and maintain health and wellbeing.
> Provide information to new and emerging communities on their rights and responsibilities, including how to access government services and how to fulfil their civic obligations.
> Continue to support programs that allow older Victorians with low English language proficiency, and people with a disability, to live safely and independently at home or in community care.
INDICATORS TO TRACK OUR PROGRESS*

We will track how Victoria is faring in providing accessible and responsive services by monitoring how CALD Victorians are progressing in these areas:

> pre-school attendance;
> meeting expected reading, writing and numeracy standards;
> participation in education and training by year 12 completers;
> unemployment;
> workforce participation;
> participation in the BreastScreen Australia program;
> doctor-diagnosed diabetes mellitus;
> physical activity;
> psychological distress;
> Home and Community Care service usage;
> National Disability Agreement service usage; and
> supported accommodation usage.

We will also monitor government expenditure on:

> interpreting and translating services; and
> advertising campaigns in the multicultural media.

* These indicators are not intended to measure the performance of particular government services or programs. This data will assist government and communities to better identify trends and emerging issues within the sector.
## List of Indicators

### Indicator by Theme: Maximising the Benefits of Our Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of CALD Victorians, compared to all Victorians, having completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.</td>
<td>ABS Census of Population and Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of CALD Victorians, compared to all Victorians, attending a University or other Tertiary Institution</td>
<td>ABS Census of Population and Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of CALD Victorians who are self-employed, compared to all Victorians</td>
<td>ABS Census of Population and Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of international visitors who visit Australia with the main purpose of visiting friends and relatives, who stopover in Victoria</td>
<td>International Visitor Survey – Tourism Research Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of all international students studying in Victoria</td>
<td>Victorian Budget Paper No 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of skilled migrants working in nominated field</td>
<td>Victorian Budget Paper No 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of students in Victorian government primary and secondary schools learning languages</td>
<td>DEECD’s Annual Languages Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Victorian government primary and secondary schools providing a languages program</td>
<td>DEECD’s Annual Languages Report</td>
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</tbody>
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### Indicator by Theme: Citizenship, Participation and Social Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of NESB Victorians, compared to English-speaking Victorians, who report that they sometimes or definitely helped out a local group as a volunteer</td>
<td>Victorian Population Health Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of NESB Victorians, compared to English-speaking Victorians, who are members of an organised group</td>
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<td>Proportion of total membership of Government Boards, Authorities and Committees from a CALD background (where data is collected)</td>
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<td>Proportion of Victorians who feel multiculturalism at least sometimes makes life better in their area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of people who think the number of immigrants accepted into Australia at present is ‘too high’</td>
<td>Scanlon Foundation: Mapping social cohesion surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of people who ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger</td>
<td>Scanlon Foundation: Mapping social cohesion surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of complaints made to Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) under the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001</td>
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<td>Number of complaints made to VEOHRC in relation to discrimination on the basis of race and religious belief under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010</td>
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## INDICATOR BY THEME

### Accessible and Responsive Services

<table>
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<td>Proportion of NESB Victorians, compared to English-speaking only, who report doctor-diagnosed diabetes mellitus (type 1 and 2, excluding gestational diabetes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of NESB Victorians, compared to English-speaking only, indicating high or very high levels of psychological distress.</td>
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<td>Proportion of Victorian HACC clients over 65 years old born in countries where English is not the main language, compared to all Victorian HACC clients over 65 years old</td>
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<td>Proportion of National Disability Agreement service use by CALD Victorians compared with access for people from outside the CALD community of the total population and potential population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of CALD Victorians by met and unmet Specialist Homelessness Services Collection support needs compared to all Victorians</td>
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<td>Percentage increase in whole-of-government expenditure to purchase interpreting and translating services</td>
<td>Annual Whole-of-Government Reporting on Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship</td>
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<td>Percentage of total government expenditure on advertising campaigns in multicultural media against target of 5%</td>
<td>Annual Whole-of-Government Reporting on Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NOTE

The data sources for the indicators define culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Victorians in a number of ways, including by:
- country of birth;
- language background; and
- self-identification.

The term “countries where English is not the main language” has been used within this document.

Where relevant, it correlates with the ABS term “Non-main English speaking countries (NMESC).”

### KEY TO ACRONYMS

- CALD: Culturally and linguistically diverse
- NESB: Non-English speaking background
- LBOTE: Language backgrounds other than English
APPENDIX TWO
RELEVANT VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

LEGISLATION

MULTICULTURAL VICTORIA ACT 2011
The Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 provides the framework for a whole-of-government approach, which recognises and values the cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria. The preamble to the Act states that:

- The Parliament recognises and values the cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria.
- The Parliament further recognises that one of the central tenets of multiculturalism is citizenship and that the expression citizenship is not limited to formal Australian citizenship, but refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a multicultural society.
- The Parliament wishes to promote Victoria as a united community with shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities within which people from a diversity of backgrounds have:
  a) the freedom and opportunity to preserve and express their cultural heritage;
  b) the freedom and opportunity to participate and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria; and
  c) equal rights and responsibilities under the laws of Victoria.

The Act includes the following principles of multiculturalism:
- all individuals in Victoria are entitled to mutual respect and understanding regardless of their diverse backgrounds;
- all individuals and institutions in Victoria should promote and preserve diversity within the context of shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities;
- all individuals in Victoria (regardless of background) have shown that they can work together to build a positive and progressive future and this co-operation is to be encouraged so as to enhance Victoria as a great place in which to live;
- all individuals in Victoria are equally entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the State;
- all individuals in Victoria have a responsibility to abide by the State’s laws and respect the democratic processes under which those laws are made;
- all individuals in Victoria should be united in a shared commitment to Australia and to community service; and
- all individuals and institutions should recognise Victoria’s diversity as an asset and a valuable resource benefiting Australia.

RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE ACT 2001
The Act prohibits behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against another person or group of people because of their race and/or religion.

The Act deals with public behaviour – not personal beliefs – and makes it against the law to make racist comments in a publication, including the Internet and email, when these incite hatred. It is also against the law to engage in vilifying abuse in a public place.

People can make a complaint to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission about a breach of this law.
**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT 2010**

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* makes discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation unlawful.


The objectives of the Act are to encourage the identification and elimination of discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation and their causes, and to promote and facilitate the progressive realisation of equality.

It is against the law under the Act to discriminate against a person on personal characteristics. These characteristics include race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and ethnic origin), and religious belief or activity. The Act applies in specific areas of public life like employment, education, accommodation, the provision of goods and services, clubs and sport.

People can make a complaint to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission about a breach of this law.

**CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006**

The Charter is a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria.

The Charter protects important human rights that support a democratic and cohesive multicultural society. These include: freedom from discrimination; the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief; freedom of expression; the right to participate in public life, and cultural rights.

The Charter compels State and local government and public servants to take human rights into consideration when making laws, setting policies and in the provision of services. New policies and legislation must also take into account human rights, and those who work for the Government must also observe human rights so that members of the community are not treated unfairly.
POLICIES

WHOLE-OF-VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

> Using Interpreting Services – Victorian Government guidelines on policy and procedures (for release in 2014)
> Effective Translation Projects – Victorian Government guidelines on policy and procedures (for release in 2014)
> Victorian Government Multicultural Communications Policy (2013)

ARTS

> Arts Victoria Cultural Diversity Action Plan 2011–2020

EDUCATION

> The Victorian Government’s Vision for Languages Education (2011)
> Victorian Government’s vision for English as an additional language in education and development settings (2013)
> The Victorian Government’s Vision for Civics, Citizenship and Multicultural Education (Awaiting final approval in 2014)
> Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Policy (2011)

HEALTH

> Cultural responsiveness framework – Guidelines for Victorian health services (2009)
> Strengthening diversity planning and practice: A guide for Victorian Home and Community Care services (2011)
> Department of Health Language Services Policy
> Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights in Victoria

HUMAN SERVICES

> Delivering for All – Department of Human Services’ Access and Equity Framework 2013–2017

JUSTICE

> Department of Justice Language Services Policy (2012)
> Department of Justice Cultural Diversity Plan 2012–2016
> Equality is not the same: Victoria Police Response to Community Consultation and Reviews on Field Contact Policy and Data Collection and Cross Cultural Training (2013)
> Office of the Public Advocate – Cultural Diversity Strategic Plan 2011–2014

STATE DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

> International Education Strategy for Victoria 2013–2018
> Victoria and India From Engagement to Partnership (2013)
> Engaging China – Strengthening Victoria (September 2012)
> South East Asia Market Engagement Plan (2013)
> Victoria’s China Tourism Strategy May (2012)

TREASURY AND FINANCE

> Working Together: Department of Treasury and Finance 2013–2015 Diversity Plan