CRAIGIEBURN students celebrated cultural diversity and “getting along” last week. Willmott Park Primary School enjoyed a performance from African drumming and dance group One Africa during its annual cultural diversity week. Students dressed up in international costumes and took part in activities including Japanese calligraphy and hip hop dance.

Cultural Diversity committee co-ordinator Megan Sloane said the students had been inspired by the activities.

“They highlighted our core values of getting along, respect and acceptance,” Mrs Sloane said.
Magnificent melting pot

The beaming smiles of Congolese and Sudanese refugee children as they chased an Aussie Rules football were a glowing endorsement for Harmony Day on Friday.

About 40 children and their families joined Shepparton’s contribution to the national celebration of Australia’s cultural diversity with a multi-code football match at Rumbalara Football Netball Club.

Organiser Gordon Porter said refugee children revelled in the chance to be instructed in both soccer and Australian Rules by players from across the region, and the day unearthed a few potential future sporting stars.

“There were some unbelievable talents. It’s great to see them kicking an Aussie Rules footy around,” Mr Porter said.

The older children later joined teams made up of Australian Rules players from Shepparton East, Congupna and Rumbalara football clubs and the North East Soccer League under 18s, lining up against each other in a friendly game that was one half soccer, one half Aussie Rules.

Spectators enjoyed an international selection of food which reflected the variety of ethnic backgrounds Shepparton has to offer.

Friday’s event followed celebrations at Bourchier St Primary School and Wanganui Park Secondary College on Thursday.

Culture: Student Kalem Harrison embraces his Aboriginal heritage. Symphony: Many ethnic groups were represented at Bourchier St. Aussie pride: Young Drew Loveridge gets into the spirit
National pride: Albanian students Erges Cipi and Emiljano Dajko proudly represented the nation at Bourney St Primary School.

Celebration: Bourney St Primary School students Kalinya Cooper and Lisa Linton celebrate on Thursday.

Listening: Bourney St's Rhyleen Glasson, Courtney Sutherland, Kaylie Fowler and Brianna Seal.

Come together: Brayden Johnson and Kalukula Kitungana celebrate Harmony Day at Rympool.
IT WAS all things Indonesian at Cranbourne Primary School last Thursday.

Staff and students celebrated an awareness of the Indonesian culture and the cultural diversity in their community.

Students dressed up and participated in workshops on cooking Indonesian snacks, interactive storytelling, drums and playing the angklung, which is a bamboo musical instrument.

Students performed a cultural show of difference in the afternoon.

Indonesian Day co-ordinator Mary Chen said the celebrations were an annual event at the school.

Celebrating Indonesian Day last week are, back from left, Sarah, Regan and Razia. Front from left are Emily and Matthew. 27815
Picture: Meagan Rogers
In on a cultural smorgasbord

BOCCE games, dance performances and free gelato were part of two Manningham schools' Cultural Diversity Week celebrations.

Donvale and Templestowe Heights primary schools received Victorian Multicultural Commission grants to run special events to mark Cultural Diversity Week last month.

Each school’s students enjoyed performances from arts organisation Cultural Infusion, worked on their bocce and soccer skills and participated in a waiter’s relay. All that hard work preceded a multicultural lunch, including gelato.

Templestowe Heights Primary students Dean, Ella, Denis, Pooja and Alessia in their multicultural attire.
Celebrate cultural diversity

THE North East’s rich multiculturalism will be on display for all to enjoy in Wangaratta tomorrow.

North East Multicultural Association (NEMA) has organised a celebration of cultural diversity with a fusion of color through global fashion and music, from 1pm at Murdoch House.

A traditional Indian Rangoli floor design, made from colored rice, will welcome guests on a journey that will travel through 12 countries, showcasing the rich cultural heritage through fashion, world music and dance.

Each costume will be explained in detail as to it's cultural significance, region, material it has been made from and for what event it was worn.

In addition, there will be dance performances by a Bollywood group from Wodonga, and a local Pilipino group; a Henna painting workshop; and traditional clothing also on display, including wedding dresses.

The cost of $15 per person includes hot and cold platters and refreshments, entrance to a lucky door prize, and lots of audience participation.

For more enquiries contact NEMA on 57220726.

CULTURE ALIVE: Helping to bring their colorful cultures to life on Saturday will be (from left) Elamprabavathy Elanshalen and Sasidien Suprimaniam (Malaysian traditional dress) and Belinda Gadsby (German folk costume).
ORANGE YOU HUNGRY: Wimmera Health Care Group celebrated its cultural diversity with a morning tea of orange-flavoured muffins and cups of orange juice as part of Harmony Day festivities at the hospital. Scottish-born Janice Chalmers offers a tray of orange muffins to staff including Tony Tuohey, CEO Chris Scott, Anne Richards, board president Bonnie Thompson and Papua New Guinea-born Emergency Department doctor Jonathon Leslie. Orange is the official colour of the statewide Cultural Diversity Week, which incorporates Harmony Day.

Picture: GREG O’CONNOR
A COMMUNITY celebration showcasing Dandenong’s cultural diversity took place last Friday.

Local groups including the Lopit Community Group, Dandenong Primary school students, and the Bosnian Choir Behar, performed for the crowd showing the array of culturally diverse groups within Greater Dandenong.

The event was one of the many around Victoria as part of Cultural Diversity Week celebrations.

Greater Dandenong community development officer Michelle Smith said the turnout was fantastic.

“The number of people who stopped by to watch the performances was higher than we’d expected. “Everyone seemed to be enjoying it and the near-perfect weather was just what we were hoping for,” she said.

Ms Smith said it was a wonderful collaboration between schools, community groups and other organisations coming together to stage a colourful and successful event.

“Being able to provide members of the general public with different cultural experiences was the highlight of The Rhythm of Cultural Diversity.”

- Bridget Cook
Greater Dandenong groups provided members of the public with different cultural experiences at Rhythm of Cultural Diversity.
Brentwood Park Primary School’s teachers and students formed a map of Australia on the oval last Tuesday to celebrate Harmony Day.

TEACHERS and students at Brentwood Park Primary School wore orange last week and banded together to form a map of Australia on the oval to celebrate Harmony Day.

As schools across Victoria held various activities to mark Cultural Diversity Week, students at the Berwick school created the map to symbolise inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone.

Harmony Day is a day to celebrate a commitment to harmony and mutual respect in a culturally diverse nation. During Cultural Diversity Week the school also marked the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March.
 Colour and fun of diversity

By Emily Sobey

It was a day for people of all backgrounds and beliefs on Saturday, as part of the Holi Festival of Colours celebration.

The festival, hosted by the Ballarat Indian Association, was part of Victorian Cultural Diversity Week.

Association spokesman Mukul Hatwal said “holi” meant “colour”, and symbolised fun.

“This is spring time in India when all the flowers come out and it is the new harvest,” Mr Hatwal said.

“All festivals have some sort of meaning and the idea behind this one is that people of any belief or background put aside their ideas and differences for a new, colourful beginning.”

About 50 people attended the festival at the Victorian Railways Institute, with both Indian and Australian families.

There was plenty of Indian attire, cooking, dancing and colourful face paint.

Mr Hatwal said the association held functions regularly to promote a wider community understanding of harmony and tolerance.

It also helped to give Ballarat’s Indian community a taste of their country.

Mr Hatwal said there were up to 60 Indian families in Ballarat and about 100 Indian students attending university here.
BENDIGO has soaked up cultures from all over the world during Cultural Diversity Week.

Folk group Ricketty Bridge kicked off celebrations last week, to be followed by a Bollywood festival later in the week.

The Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services showcased local cultural performers and internationally acclaimed Timorese group Sol Nation thrilled crowds.

Indigenous Hip Hop Projects capped off the week yesterday with an energetic performance and dance workshop in the library gardens.

City of Greater Bendigo cultural diversity officer Jenny McQuilkin said the group was the perfect act to close celebrations.

"Indigenous Hip Hop Projects performed in Bendigo last year for National Reconciliation Week and it was so successful that we asked it to come back," she said.

Cultural Diversity Week is an initiative of the State Government to highlight Victoria's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.
City gets good rap for diversity

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Students share backgrounds

NORLANE West Primary School held a magnificent community event, sponsored by the Multicultural Commission of Victoria, during Cultural Diversity Week.

Students, teachers and parents shared their cultural backgrounds by dressing in national costumes and participating in activities that included Italian pasta-making, Dutch cheese tasting and learning a traditional Macedonian dance.

At lunch-time a feast of culinary delights from around the world was shared and enjoyed by all. In the afternoon the students entertained the school community with some multi-cultural singing and dancing.

The event, attended by about 1000 people, proved a wonderful celebration of the culturally diverse nature of the school.
Colourful day: Norlane West Primary School students dressed in national costumes at the school event.

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Dance heals spirit of scorched land

ABORIGINAL dancers from East Arnhem Land gave the audience a rare glimpse into ceremonial dance during a surprise performance in Fairfield.

The Numburindi people from Numbulwar made an impromptu two-week visit to dance in Victoria’s fire-affected communities, but on their way through stopped in at the Black Harmony Gathering at Fairfield Amphitheatre.

“We came down for the mob that was burnt in the fires,” said group member Verna Wurramarra. “We are doing the devil dance, the eagle dance and the canoe dance for the people who have died.”

She said the dances would help heal the land and put its spirit back. Braving squally winds and rain, the men wore nothing but lap-laps, feathers and paint, while the women danced fully clothed.

The accomplished dancers whirled and stamped around the amphitheatre, in the heart of Wurundjeri country, to the beat of clapsticks and sound of the didgeridoo.

They finished just before torrential rain washed out the event, which is held as part of Cultural Diversity Week and features indigenous musicians and dancers and artists from the Horn of Africa, East Timor and other refugee groups.

Koori hip-hop artists Meriki Hood and Johnny Mac braved the inclement weather and performed for a small audience.
Student Ricky tries the spaghetti.

Trying diversity

SCHOOL had a distinctly foreign flavour for students at Staughton College last week. The school held a Cultural Diversity Week with a series of events aimed at engaging students in different cultures. Activities included spaghetti-eating, a soccer competition, Samoan dancing, mask-making and a visit from a gelati van. The school has students from several backgrounds, including Samoan and Sudanese. Teachers also enjoyed food from different countries at a luncheon.
Cultural diversity celebrated

MULTICULTURAL community leaders of Brimbank met for a special breakfast last Tuesday to mark Cultural Diversity Week.

The annual event featured cultural performances including Aboriginal Konrad Ross playing the didgeridoo and 2008 Brimbank Idol winner Bianca Fioritti singing I Am Australian.

The breakfast gave community leaders the chance to network and learn how other groups operate.

Marnie Selvendra, representing the North West Tamil Society in Taylors Lakes and the Melbourne Murugan Cultural Centre in Sunshine, said it was about socialising.

"It’s a good way to meet other community groups and see how they run," she said.

"It’s also a chance for us to meet and mingle with the councillors, MPs and council officers who can help improve our association."

Mary de Bono helped start the Multicultural Senior Citizens Centre in Sunshine West 28 years ago and is still active.

"Our group caters for the Maltese, Italian, Turkish, Polish and Greek communities," she said.

"This breakfast is great, it helps to see multiculturalism working so well. It’s a good way for us to speak to other clubs and find out how they go about running things."

Special occasion: Konrad Ross plays the didgeridoo at the breakfast
Pupils’ cultural journey

ALBION North Primary School seemed even more multicultural than usual on Wednesday. Pupils dressed up in national costumes and held a concert for Cultural Diversity Week. With the event theme ‘around the world in an afternoon’, pupils performed American Indian, Irish, Italian, French, Spanish, Japanese and Indonesian songs.

The pupils have been studying a range of cultures in class in preparation for the event. Teacher Leanne Dumaresq said it was important for the school’s pupils — who represent 20 nationalities — to know about the cultures of their peers.

“We are endeavouring to promote our harmonious community and help create a society built on understanding, acceptance and mutual respect.”

All together: Lisa, Evan and Hayley travelled around the world in an afternoon for Cultural Diversity Week. Picture: Joseph Mastroianni
Savouring sense of harmony

With more than 150 nationalities, Greater Dandenong residents were spoilt for choice when celebrating Cultural Diversity Week. REBECCA DAVID reports

AROUND the world in seven days ... sound impossible? Not in Greater Dandenong.

From the aroma of exotic cuisines to the sound of drums, the city came alive to celebrate its melting pot of races during Cultural Diversity Week.

Springvale Neighbourhood House got in early with a free festival on Tuesday featuring performances by the Silagan Cultural Dance Group, Blue Lagoon Polynesian dancers, Ao Hua Chinese Music Group and United Filipino Group.

Fun and festivities were also on offer at Noble Park AMES, promoting the Harmony Day message of “Everyone Belongs”.

Education unit manager Sam Navarria said the day saw hundreds of migrants, refugees and established residents working together on craft demonstrations, cultural displays and live entertainment.

“It’s about community participation, inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone,” Mr Navarria said.

Staff members at Wellsprings for Women in Dandenong also joined in the fun by sharing multicultural dishes as part of the event A Taste of Harmony.

At Palm Plaza the universal language of music was shared, with performances by the Lopit Community Group and Dandenong Primary School students.

“Our city is a fine example of how people from diverse backgrounds can come together to create a vibrant, caring community,” mayor Pinar Yesil said.

Greater Dandenong Council and VicUrban, Southern Health, Greater Dandenong Community Health Centre, Bunurong Community Care and Centrelink staged the event.
Culinary journey

Dandenong's Wellsprings for Women began Cultural Diversity Week with a Taste of Harmony staff lunch last Monday. Wellsprings program co-ordinator Jessica Goddard and manager Veronica Hassett, pictured, brought together the 20 staff from 11 nations to celebrate their diversity. The staff — from England, Australia, Scotland, North America, Afghanistan, Finland, South Africa, Fiji and Kenya — prepared traditional food from their country. A Taste of Harmony, which encourages workplaces to gather employees over a lunch made up of foods from different lands, took place last week in the lead-up to National Harmony Day on Friday.

Picture: Ted Kloszynski
Cultural melting pot is united

By John Lewis

The room was tiny but somehow it held four continents worth of people — all talking at once.

This was a glimpse of Shepparton’s growing ethnic rainbow.

Chatter bounced off the walls as about a hundred staff members gathered for a special morning tea at the Shepparton campus of Goulburn Ovens TAFE college on Tuesday.

Multicultural Education Centre manager Balvinder Kaur said the tea was held to celebrate Harmony Week.

“We are celebrating cultural diversity in the workplace — we have so many different cultures who work here at the TAFE,” Ms Balvinder said.

To support her claim, the table was spread with a baffling array of treats — some familiar traditional Aussie fare, others not.

Spicy vegetables from Afghanistan were crammed next to chocolate cake, scones and Malaysian spring rolls — all brought by bilingual aid workers, administration personnel, teachers, and support staff.

Ms Balvinder said TAFE employed people with Afghani, Chinese, Malaysian and Koori backgrounds, while students came from Iraq, Iran the Congo, Sudan, China, India, Turkey, Albania, Afghanistan and many other places.

“We have a unique group of people here at TAFE. This is a chance for us all to get to know each other a little better,” she said.

“It’s an enriching experience for everyone.”

Food celebration: Charles Atkinson, Roland Atkinson, Hafiza Khoshiwal, Samira Ali and Doris Nielsen at the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE Harmony Week morning tea.
PUPILS at The Grange P-12 College primary campus were encouraged to dress in their national attire or as someone they admired for the start of its Cultural Diversity Week celebrations last Monday.

The celebration of cultural difference was followed by a haka performance by Pacific Islander students from the school’s senior campus.

Teacher Lorraine Carli said the college’s students came from a wide range of backgrounds, which made it important to acknowledge how people lived around the world.

“Throughout the week, the students and teachers will be doing things such as learning to greet in another language, and reading stones from other countries,” she said.

“It’s about celebrating that we all are able to come together and share our differences.”

Margaret Burin

Ahoy, matey: Prep pupils Tyson and Lachlan look the part in their pirate suits.

Picture: Scott McNaughton
Creative work keeps in tune with harmony

By Kayla Maskell

Harmony Day is officially celebrated on March 21 but activities are taking place at Shepparton’s Wilmot Rd Primary School all of this week to further promote cultural diversity.

Art is a particular focus of celebrations taking place at the school with the children’s work being displayed and shared with their fellow students and teachers. Wilmot Rd Primary School teachers’ aide Cathrine Armstrong said last week, students within their classes created their art displays which demonstrated what harmony meant to them.

“It’s all within a harmony theme and this week we have the art on display so that it can be shared with everyone,” she said.

“We have taken part in this in past years. Harmony Week is very important to our school as we have so many students from different countries so it’s all about learning to respect those cultures.”

Gowrie St, St Brendan’s, St George’s Rd and Bourchier St Primary schools will also be taking part in harmony activities this week as will the Shepparton English Language Centre. An event open to the public will be held at Shepparton’s Rumball Football Club grounds on Saturday.

Celebrating: Wilmot Rd Primary School student Sena Unlu, 10, helped to make world flags as part of Harmony Week. Picture: Bethanie Sessions
Doctors without borders

During Cultural Diversity Week, RUZA ZIVKUSIC discovers how St Albans Medical Centre has been built on multiculturalism.

AT the heart of its multicultural suburb, the St Albans Medical Centre was established by Russian doctor and migrant Igor Balabin, in 1958.

Dr Balabin raised his family in the house in which he worked. He practised medicine at the centre for 47 years and delivered more than 2000 babies, before his death at 80.

Dr Vladimir Vizec, who joined Dr Balabin in 1975, says the practice has always been influenced by the rich mix of migrants in the area, including a recent influx of refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

“We see more than 10 different ethnic groups here,” Dr Vizec said.

Four GPs, each with a former Yugoslavian background, work at the centre.

Dr Vesna Levar says the GPs understand how different cultural backgrounds can impact on their patients’ needs.

“When you know the patients’ families and their surroundings and culture you can manage and treat them in a culturally appropriate way — it is so important because we all react differently,” Dr Levar said.

Dr Vesna Dobric joined the team four years ago. She was a urologist in Serbia and treated many refugees following the 1990s Bosnian war.

“I’m happy seeing people from all over the world here,” she said.

“It makes me feel wealthier, in a sense; I have more experience because I am flexible and understand their backgrounds.”

Dr Dobric has often turned to sign language and drawings on paper to communicate with her African patients, some of whom have limited English.

“My approach to the profession is very serious, but it would be so boring if I didn’t make a few jokes and if I didn’t try to relax the patients and the staff.”

Diverse practice: Vesna Dobric, Vladimir Vizec and Vesna Levar.

Picture: Darren Howe
Celebration of culture

Food and dance in harmony

By PETER COLLINS

AN enticing aroma of curries and traditional foods drifted over Warrnambool’s Civic Green as dancers and singers from many nationalities celebrated their cultures.

Thousands of people enjoyed the Gnatannwarr Multicultural Festival described by Mayor Michael Neoh as the best ever.

“The crowds stayed longer because the festival was more interactive than normal,” he said.

Even local MP Denis Napthine got into the action, showing his dancing prowess on the lawn as MC Shane Robertson called for crowd participation.

Sudanese dancers and singers, a Filipino dance group, Aboriginal singers and musicians and a Brazilian acrobatic and martial arts group were among the performers.

“There were also lots of things for children to do. If they stay then the parents will stay,” Cr Neoh said.

“The key to a good festival is children.

“It’s good to see the Civic Green being used regularly.”

“Warrnambool has many good public open spaces. I’d welcome suggestions from community groups on how these spaces can be used more on weekends.”

The Warrnambool festival preceded national harmony day next Saturday, when about 3500 events will be held around Australia.

“Harmony day celebrates the cohesive nature of Australian communities and promotes the benefits of cultural diversity,” Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, said.

Sudanese-born Juina Lual, 7, from Warrnambool. 090314DW31

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Sudanese migrants find a mentor in Jikany

MOVING to a foreign country is a daunting experience for anybody, especially when your former home has been torn apart by war, drought and famine.

For Jikany Deiwal, this was the situation he faced when he fled Sudan in 1999. The young Sudanese man came to Australia in 2000 after a short stay in an Egyptian refugee camp and said he was “overwhelmed” with his new life.

The 26-year-old project worker for the Southern Ethnic Advisory and Advocacy Council (SEAAC) now helps young migrants settle in Australia. He said he wished he had known about the service when he arrived here.

“It was different back then, I wasn’t aware of all the services on offer or that a lot of Sudanese people were actually working in SEAAC and other not-for-profit organisations,” Mr Deiwal said. Through SEAAC, which has bases in Springvale, Noble Park, Clayton and Oakleigh, Mr Deiwal works with migrants aged between 12 and 25, helping them with school work and supporting migrants in a basketball team.

Mr Deiwal said it was often hard to get young people involved because of their past experiences in war-torn countries. SEAAC co-ordinator Steve Theocontou said the organisation, through government grants, offered several services for migrant.

This week is Cultural Diversity Week (March 15-21). Details: culturaldiversity.vic.gov.au.

Sudanese community leader Jikany Deiwal (right) with youth worker Kor Pouc. Picture: MARK STEWART. N480S40E

Ref: 48621110
Free arts and cultural events for all to enjoy

Ballarat residents are invited to come and be part of the free arts and cultural events celebrating Cultural Diversity Week which will take place in Ballarat from Tuesday 17 to Monday 23 March.

The event will be launched with a flag raising ceremony on Wednesday 18 March at 9am in Sturt St opposite the Town Hall.

A procession will then take the Harmony Day flags to the Mining Exchange, where the opening ceremony will continue.

Ballarat Mayor Cr Judy Verlin will be in attendance and the Tashi Lhumpo monks from Tibet will perform a blessing.

From Wednesday 18 to Saturday 21 March in the Mining Exchange the Tibetan monks will create a sand mandala, designed to bless the earth and its inhabitants.

The monks build the sacred Tibetan symbol using millions of grains of coloured sand. This is a very fine and intricate process requiring patience and concentration.

When the mandala is finished it is dismantled. The sand is swept up and carried to a nearby water source where it is symbolically scattered to demonstrate that nothing lasts forever. In Ballarat the mandala sand will be placed in the lake at the Eureka Stockade Gardens.

Ballarat residents will also have the chance to hear Tibetan inspired music by Tenzin Choegyal who is well known for his soaring vocals. He plays the dranyen (a long necked flute), lingbu (transverse flute) and ritual instruments. Tenzin will also be leading a workshop in Tibetan singing at the Mining Exchange at 1.30pm on Friday 20 March.

The city’s multicultural community groups will run workshops at the Mining Exchange. This is your chance to learn Chinese paper cutting, calligraphy and how to make opera masks. African hair braiding, drumming and food demonstrations will also be on offer. You also have the chance to learn Japanese cloth wrapping and flower arranging.

Bollywood dancing, yoga and henna tattoos workshops are being organised by the local Indian community.

The majority of the events are being held at the Mining Exchange, but activities will also be staged at the Ballarat Library, Portico, Ebenezer Church, Cooinda Centre, Eureka Gardens, Lake Wendouree, Pleasant Street Primary School and Golden Point Cultural Centre.

For further information about Cultural Diversity Week visit www.ballarat.vic.gov.au or call 5320 5746.

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**AT A GLANCE**

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK**

**WHEN:** Tuesday 17 March to Monday 23 March

**MORE INFO:** Visit www.ballarat.vic.gov.au or call 5320 5746
Diverse week of shared cultures

BY KIM WATERS

WITH 70,000 of Brimbank’s population born overseas, it’s little surprise the region is gearing up to celebrate a week of cultural diversity in March.

From 15-22 March, residents can attend various cultural activities, music events and dinners all designed to promote harmony and create a supported and welcoming community.

Brimbank Council’s general manager community well-being Kelly Grigsby, said Cultural Diversity Week events were designed to promote harmony and a sense of community in Brimbank.

“Extensive community conversations that have taken place have clearly indicated that creating a supported and welcoming community is held in high regard,” Ms Grigsby said.

“Cultural Diversity Week promotes an increased sense of belonging for community members, demonstrates harmony for Brimbank’s diverse communities and encourages residents to participate more in community life.”

Ms Grigsby said Cultural Diversity Week was also a chance for council to develop partnerships with diverse groups, agencies and organisations.