

Victorian Multicultural Commission

Annual Report
2020-21





Acknowledgment of Country

The Victorian Multicultural Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land now known as Victoria and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ongoing spiritual, cultural, material and economic connection to land, water and resources.

Gambian musician Amadou Suso performed at the VMC's stakeholder cocktail event.

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Message from the Chairperson



I am pleased to present our 2020–2021 Annual Report and to provide a summary of a remarkable, challenging year for the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and our state’s culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities.

I am in awe of the resilience, courage and generosity shown by community members, staff and our allies across the state over the last year. Thank you all for your efforts.

Victoria faced the worst of the pandemic in the last 12 months. Through our direct engagement, being on the frontline and working directly with the communities, we forged and strengthened our relationships across government. We brought department and agency representatives directly together with communities to deepen their understanding of current and emerging challenges. This led to improved responses as the Delta variant reached our shores.

Our Regional Advisory Councils (RAC) network proved to be critical during the pandemic. They assisted the VMC with the timely dissemination of important information and helped maintain two-way communications – particularly to groups where standard communications were not as effective.

Throughout the year, the VMC has engaged extensively with Victoria’s multicultural and multifaith communities. We hosted more than 30 community roundtables and more than 20 RAC meetings. We co-chaired the North Melbourne Flemington and Yarra Public Housing Estates Working Groups. We attended numerous community-led consultations and co-hosted anti-racism seminars with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC).

We also carried out a range of conversations with community organisations and leaders, service providers and subject matter experts. These

activities helped build trust and connection, and paved the way for more effective service delivery by government in a number of areas.

The anxiety, isolation, grief and trauma of the pandemic have deeply affected our multicultural and multifaith communities. I am proud of the way the Multifaith Advisory Group (MAG) demonstrated leadership and unity. Our MAG members have mobilised and provided critical outreach work during times of crisis, supporting diverse groups throughout the lockdowns and coming together during India’s second wave for a vigil to support Victoria’s diaspora community.

In my second year as chairperson, I am continuing to learn every single day. The VMC’s role as a conduit between multicultural communities and government has truly come into its own this year. With a strong focus on meaningful engagement with communities, we have elevated their voices and drawn on their insights and ideas to inform our ongoing advice to government on a range of matters.

Our priorities since the beginning of the pandemic have been firmly centred around the health and welfare of multicultural communities. We have continued our deep engagement with them and acted as an escalation point in many areas where systems, structures and processes were not necessarily reflective of the community’s needs. This included bringing community voices to departments throughout successive outbreaks and mobilising community leaders to increase awareness around testing and isolating, vaccines and QR codes.

We also advanced our other strategic priorities.

We regularly engaged with several departments to elevate the needs of the community on employment and small business, and we will continue to work with them to improve access and reduce barriers for all diverse communities.

We advocated for greater access and resources in the family violence area by co-chairing the Multicultural Family Violence Working Group with Family Safety Victoria.

The VMC is a member of several taskforces. We provide strategic and practical input to:

- ▶ the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Taskforce and the Food Relief Taskforce with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- ▶ the CALD Health Advisory Panel with the Department of Health
- ▶ the Justice Partnership Committee with the Department of Justice and Community Safety
- ▶ the Multicultural Learning Partnership with the Department of Education and Training.

We continue to work across government departments in our conduit and advocacy role.

We also commissioned two reports to understand the impact of unemployment on CALD people and avenues to support employment opportunities, innovation and foster business entrepreneurship. I thank all the members of the Employment Working Group for their advice and support.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, we continued to celebrate significant cultural moments and milestones with our diverse communities. Seeing members of our community and wider circle face-to-face gave us a much-needed burst of joy. Our Cultural Diversity Week (CDW) events returned in March in hybrid form and our existing, new and prospective CDW sponsors and supporters came together in person for the first time in a long time at a stakeholder cocktail function in May.

I also wish to thank every single individual who joined us at our meetings and many roundtable discussions, sharing views and concerns, as well as

everyone who called or sent us an email to share their perspectives and feedback. Through your active participation, you have helped highlight the critical needs of your communities and enable resources to be provided.

I am deeply grateful to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Ros Spence MP, and Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, Mr Josh Bull MP, for their continued support.

I also appreciate our colleagues at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Health and other government departments for their ongoing collaboration in serving Victoria's multicultural communities.

I thank the commissioners – each with their own unique lived experience, passions and community connections – who have helped steer the VMC throughout the year. A special thanks to the commissioners whose terms were due to end later this year for the enormous contributions they have made.

I would like to highlight the VMC's Deputy Chairperson, Bwe Thay, for his tireless work amplifying the voices of Victoria's multicultural and multifaith communities.

Finally, I thank the VMC staff for their dedication, skill and extraordinary effort over a challenging year. They are the engine room that makes the commission run so well.

I look forward to continuing our service in the coming year. I have no doubt that the hard work undertaken in 2020–2021 will support ongoing responses to outbreaks and help lead us into the recovery phase. Our state will come out of the pandemic stronger and more cohesive because of the effort of all Victorians.



Vivienne Nguyen AM
Chairperson

About the VMC

Overview

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) plays a critical role in strengthening cultural diversity in Victoria through consultation, advocacy, celebration and promotion.

The VMC's statutory role includes promoting full participation by all Victorians regardless of their cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Our primary stakeholders are:

- ▶ multicultural communities (community organisations, multicultural service providers, peak bodies)
- ▶ the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Victorian government departments, statutory bodies and agencies.

As the main link between communities and government, the Victorian Multicultural Commission engages with multicultural and multifaith groups to understand the issues, challenges and opportunities that they face. We work together to identify and recommend potential solutions to government, policymakers and community organisations to make public services more inclusive and accessible.

The VMC promotes diversity via a strengths-based approach, bolstering social cohesion, empowering community-based solutions and celebrating the benefits of diversity.

The VMC undertakes regular consultations with multicultural communities, including through a network of Regional Advisory Councils across the state, to inform our priorities and program of work. We provide advice to government that helps shape public policy and supports the delivery of government services for diverse communities.

We advocate for tangible, systemic change within government departments, such as workforce diversity, data collation and measurable outcomes. We also collaborate with government departments, statutory bodies, service providers and advocacy bodies to promote the cultural, social and economic benefits of diversity in our state.

Mission statement

We support and advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.



The Act

Established in 1983 and now constituted under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, the VMC is a statutory body dedicated to promoting diversity across all areas of society and advocating on behalf of multicultural communities to all levels of government.

The Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 recognises that citizenship is central to multiculturalism. Aside from Australian citizenship, it also refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a multicultural society.

The Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 came into effect on 1 September 2011.



Machinery of government changes

On 1 February 2021 the Multicultural Affairs portfolio, which is part of Fairer Victoria, moved from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to the newly created Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH).

Victoria in 2020–2021: A snapshot

With our country's latest Census to be held in August 2021 and the resulting data due for report in June 2022, we all look ahead to what this fresh information can reveal about our nation and our state. Victoria continues to evolve as a melting pot of cultures, faiths, languages and backgrounds and remains one of the most diverse societies in the world.

Diversity in our state

Our state's diversity can only be acknowledged within the context of recognising First Nations People, their cultures, customs and rights. When discussing cultural diversity, we recognise the more than 60,000 years of diverse cultures and customs in this country and acknowledge Aboriginal Victorians as an integral and valued part of Victoria's past, present and future.

- ▶ As of December 2020, the total population of Victoria was over 6,661,700 people.
- ▶ Of them, close to a third (28 per cent) were born overseas, in more than 200 countries.
- ▶ Nearly half of all Victorians (49 per cent) were born overseas or were born in Australia with at least one parent who was born overseas.
- ▶ A quarter of Victorians (26 per cent) indicated they spoke a language other than English at home.
- ▶ Three in five Victorians (59 per cent) followed one of more than 130 different faiths.

Migration to Victoria

- ▶ For decades, Victoria has attracted migrants from all over the world, contributing to an increasingly multicultural society.
- ▶ Migrants, whether they have come by choice or necessity, make a significant contribution to Victoria's economic, social and cultural fabric.
- ▶ Since World War II, more than 7.5 million people have made Australia their home.
- ▶ Of these, more than 800,000 have been refugees and humanitarian entrants from a diverse range of countries.

To address the needs of Victoria's considerable cultural diversity, our state is home to more than 4,000 ethno-specific, faith-specific and multicultural community organisations, including peak bodies and subject matter experts. The VMC endeavours to engage and build fruitful relationships with each of these groups as we work towards the mutual goal of a strong, equal and culturally safe state.

VMC commissioners

The VMC is led by 12 commissioners from a range of cultural, faith and professional backgrounds, who have a clear mandate to support Victorians of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in all aspects of society.

As community leaders themselves, our commissioners work at a grassroots level to gain a thorough understanding of the issues facing multicultural communities. They work alongside community and faith groups to foster greater collaboration and unity.

Our commissioners meet monthly and attend and support community-led initiatives and events. They work collaboratively to elevate the voices of multicultural and multifaith communities and advocate on their behalf to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and across the Victorian Government.

Viv Nguyen AM, Chairperson

Current term: 24 August 2019 to 23 August 2023

First appointed: 24 August 2019



Vivienne Nguyen arrived in Australia as a 12-year-old refugee from Vietnam.

For over 25 years Viv has worked as a business executive and a community leader in corporate, community

and government settings. Viv applies her business knowledge, leadership and technical expertise to help organisations advance their social objectives.

Viv has held roles at the AustChoice Financial Services, AMP Asset Management and ANZ Banking Group, where she led the global organisation's diversity strategy.

Along with her corporate career, Viv's community activities span across many different cultures to provide input into public policy on asylum seekers, civic engagement, participation and human rights.

Viv was recorded on the Victorian Honour Roll in 2002 for advocating for women in leadership and working with Vietnamese young people. In June 2021, Viv became a member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the multicultural community of Victoria.

Viv joined Victoria's first Anti-Racism Taskforce in 2021 to help inform and drive the state's Anti-Racism Strategy.

Viv was appointed as the Chairperson for the Victorian Multicultural Commission in late 2019.

Bwe Thay, Deputy Chairperson

Current term: September 2019 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2019

Regional Advisory Council: Gippsland and Eastern



Bwe Thay is a spirited advocate for a multicultural Australia. He works to develop the capacity of multicultural communities, with a focus on leadership development, education and employment

outcomes. His involvement extends from working with individual communities to advocacy at the highest levels. His work informs the direction and policy of service providers, business and all levels of government.

Bwe has held many leadership roles within Victoria's multicultural sector and has been widely recognised for his advocacy, community service and professional achievements. This recognition includes the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Emerging Leadership in Multiculturalism Award.

Bwe has a strong commitment to promoting harmony by engaging and bringing communities together to build a vibrant society. His practical, hands-on approach is well recognized within multicultural communities.

He currently chairs the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Gippsland Regional Advisory Committee and is a Multicultural Ambassador for the Mental Health Foundation of Australia.

Mohammed Yassin, Community Representative Commissioner

Current term: September 2019 to August 2021

First appointed: September 2019

Regional Advisory Council: North West
Metropolitan Melbourne



Mohammed Yassin is an emerging leader and a former refugee, arriving in Australia in 2003 and settling in Shepparton for two years before moving to Melbourne. An entrepreneur and advocate

with a passion for supporting multicultural communities and young people, Mohammed is the founder and CEO of Culture and Co, a cultural training and consulting organisation that is working with the government and the non-for-profit sector to create programs that meet the needs of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

He has completed a Bachelor of Biomedical Science with Honours from the University of Melbourne and worked as a cancer research scientist with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Currently, he serves as board of directors' member with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and a project lead - 'Strategic partnerships and community engagement' with Spectrum MRC.

Khayshie Tilak Ramesh, Youth Commissioner

Current term: September 2019 to August 2021

First appointed: February 2019



Khayshie is passionate advocate for youth, multiculturalism and diverse representation at influential decision-making tables. She is an experienced board director, youth mentor and admitted lawyer.

Khayshie has been an active member of the Bendigo community, having served as the Inaugural Youth Mayor and Chair of the City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council. She has also served on boards and committees including Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, ARC Justice, Ambulance Victoria Community Advisory Committee, City of Greater Bendigo Economic Strategy Committee, YWCA Australia, Victoria's Volunteer Strategy Taskforce and the Multicultural Youth Network.

Khayshie has been recognised as Young Citizen of the Year, Premier's Volunteer Leadership Award Recipient, Law Institute of Victoria's Law Student of the Year and as a Top 100 Future Leader of Australia.

Tina Hosseini

Current term: October 2015 to August 2021

First appointed: October 2015 (former Youth Commissioner)

Regional Advisory Council: Southern Metropolitan



Tina is a passionate campaigner for multiculturalism, human rights, social justice and adolescent health and well-being. She is currently a Research Fellow at Swinburne University, focused on the

evaluation of school-based training programs in the area of countering violent extremism (CVE). She was previously a Deakin University Research Fellow where she researched adolescent prevention-based projects focused on reducing problem behaviours such as drug and alcohol use, mental health issues, antisocial behaviour, family conflict, school disengagement and depressive symptomology.

She is an active member of the Iranian Women's Association, Deputy Chair of the Victorian Red Cross Board, a Board member of the City Local Learning and Employment Network, a Member of the Victorian Children's Council and an inaugural member of the Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) Strategic Advisory Committee.

Tina holds a Master of Science (Distinction) and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Melbourne and has completed the Foundations of Directorship course at the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She has also held leadership roles with the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre and was a previous chair of the Multicultural Youth Network.

Shankar Kasynathan

Current term: September 2019 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2019

Regional Advisory Council: Barwon South West



Shankar Kasynathan came to Australia with his family as refugees.

Over the past 15 years he has worked closely with refugee and migrant communities in Victoria, the Northern Territory

and the ACT. A skilled communications and public policy specialist, he has degrees in Economics and Public Policy. He is an active supporter of community organisations that help to build partnerships and social cohesion in regional areas.

Since December 2017, Shankar has been a national campaign manager with Amnesty International Australia. He is also an ambassador for the Migrant Workers Centre. He currently resides in Geelong where he is the Chair of the Barwon Regional Advisory Council.

Walter Rapoport

Current term: November 2017 – August 2021

First appointed: November 2017

Regional Advisory Council: Grampians



Walter Rapoport is a former Chairperson of the Council of Christians and Jews (Victoria) and edited the Council's annual journal, *Gesher*, from 2013 to 2016.

Walter has had a long and abiding interest in interfaith and intercultural engagement and served as the inaugural Chairman of the interfaith relations committee of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission, an Australian organisation dedicated to combating anti-Semitism and all other forms of racism and hatred.

He also chaired the steering committees of two projects delivered under the Commonwealth Government's Living in Harmony grants program, 'Building Bridges' and 'Embracing Youth'. He is cofounder and joint-CEO of a finance company.

Dr Judy Tang

Current term: September 2019 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2019

Regional Advisory Council: Hume



Judy Tang is a strong advocate for multiculturalism and LGBTQIA+ communities with expertise in psychology, ageing, research and mental health. With extensive relationships across

government and community groups, Judy has volunteered for more than 15 years to promote and advocate for multiculturalism and equality for migrants.

She is a former President of the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council, a national body that advocates for the rights of multicultural and multifaith LGBTQIA+ people and communities and currently sits on the Board of the Victorian Pride Centre. Judy has a doctorate in neuropsychology and is a practicing Clinical Neuropsychologist.

Rosaria Zarro

Current term: November 2017 to August 2021

First appointed: November 2017

Regional Advisory Council: Loddon Mallee



Rosaria Zarro has been an educator for the past 19 years, with experience teaching Italian, Science and History in government schools and cultural organisations. She has worked for Museum Victoria,

Museo Italiano and the State Library of Victoria to produce and deliver education programs based around their exhibitions and collections.

In her role as commissioner, she chairs the VMC Barwon South West Regional Advisory Council and in 2020 joined the Loddon Mallee Regional Advisory Council, providing information about issues and challenges impacting multicultural communities in the region to government. She also sits on other boards that represent culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the health sector and in education.

Outgoing commissioners

We would like to thank our commissioners who have completed their terms over the last year. We are grateful for their dedication to representing the interests of diverse communities in Victoria.

These commissioners have listened to and spoken for many people who feel like they don't have a voice in how our state is run and they have built strategies to address the issues that matter most to them.

Thank you to all our outgoing commissioners for your brilliant work.

Maria Dimopoulos – Concluded her term July 2020.

Sisay Dinku – Concluded his term November 2020.

David Nyuol Vincent – Concluded his term January 2021.

In memoriam

There has been immense loss experienced across the world in the last year. Closer to home, we farewelled two Victorian champions of multiculturalism.

George Zangalis

1931 – 2021



George Zangalis believed in respecting, protecting and celebrating our cultural differences. He was a valued supporter of the VMC and often took part in our community forums, debates, consultations and events.

George arrived in Australia from Greece in 1950, aged 18, and immediately set to work fighting for migrant worker rights through the trade union movement. He was proud of his cultural heritage and believed all workers should be treated fairly and equally.

In 1974, George was one of the founding fathers of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV). To this day, the ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government to help diverse communities thrive.

We could not possibly list all of George's achievements on one sheet of paper. He has worked passionately across activism, advocacy and broadcasting and brought about so much positive change. Simply put, he has made Victoria a better place to live for all of us.

We offer our deepest sympathies to his wife Cavell, his children, Vasso and Paul, his grandchildren and everyone who has called him a friend.

'George Zangalis was first a colleague and friend, also a foundation and long-term member of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria and a champion for migrant workers' rights. His influence and impact paved the way for migrants to take an active role in the development of the successful multicultural Australian society we enjoy today. George refused to retire and remained active till the end with his involvement in ethnic radio, especially 3ZZZ.'

– Eddie Micallef, Chairperson Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria

The Venerable Philip Newman OAM

1940 – 2021



Archdeacon Reverend Philip Newman was a pioneer in advancing interfaith relations in Victoria. He was renowned for his compassion and understanding and was a much-loved member of the VMC's Multifaith Advisory

Group.

Reverend Philip believed that faith communities held so much in common in the way they lived and worshipped. He forged vital interfaith partnerships which were born out of genuine friendships. He was also part of the Port Philip Multifaith Network, the Victoria Police Multifaith Taskforce and the Faith Communities Council of Victoria.

Reverend Philip's life was dedicated to service in many forms. Beyond his position as Archdeacon with the Anglican Church, he was committed to philanthropic work, both in Victoria and internationally. He co-founded Anglican Overseas Aid and travelled to Ethiopia, Palestine, Rwanda and Indonesia to lead charitable projects.

Reverend Philip's incredible service to refugees and vulnerable Australians was formally recognised in 2002, when he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to Reverend Philip's wife, Becky, children Chris, Pam and Pete, and all his family, friends and parishioners.

'The Venerable Philip Newman is remembered for his generosity, kind heart and hard work.

He was a regular at multifaith and multicultural events. He knew friendships are nurtured and trust is strengthened in person.

We remember his contributions with gratitude.'

– Bishop Philip Huggins

'Philip was a lovely person who always had time for his friends and community. His style of engagement was one of warmth and empathy. He will be missed by all his friends.'

– Mohamed F Mohideen OAM, President, Islamic Council of Victoria

In memory of those we lost to the pandemic in 2020–2021

The coronavirus pandemic has taken countless lives, from across all backgrounds and layers of society. Each loss is felt deeply and this collective sorrow will have a lasting impact on us all.

We wish to pay tribute to those we lost over 2020–2021 – here in Victoria, as well as throughout Australia and across the world.

While it can be easy to think of these deaths as statistics or numbers on a chart, we acknowledge that each one represents a real person – someone with a family, a history, with individual hopes and wishes. The pain of these losses is compounded by the fact that grieving is often something we must do alone, as we observe social distancing as well as restrictions on travel and gathering.

The VMC expresses its deepest sympathy to those who have experienced loss over this time and we recognise the courage, strength and generosity of so many community groups that have rallied together to offer support and comfort to those affected.

VMC strategic priorities

2020–2021 objectives

The VMC performs an important role in fostering harmony and social cohesion in Victoria, acting as a vital conduit between the state’s culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities and the Victorian Government.

Over the last year, the importance of the VMC’s role has been reinforced, as we witnessed the disproportionate impact the coronavirus pandemic had on multicultural communities in Victoria. This also exacerbated pre-existing issues, such as access to information and services, lack of equity and representation, and increased risk of unemployment and food insecurity among these communities.

In November 2020, the new Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Honourable Ros Spence, outlined her expectation that the Commission deliver on its core statutory functions, focusing on three primary domains of activity:

- ▶ promotion and advocacy
- ▶ investigation and reporting
- ▶ community leadership.

In addition to the VMC’s statutory objectives and functions, the Commission is expected to support government policies and priorities by aligning its work with the Victorian Government’s core objectives. In 2020–2021, this included contributing to the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery across the state.

Looking ahead

In the last 12 months, Victoria has continued to face COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdowns, as well as enjoying periods of respite and recovery.

Our multicultural and multifaith communities have shown incredible strength and fortitude. The spotlight has been directed onto many of the already existing challenges these communities face.

As a result, there is a new awareness and appreciation across the public, the media and all levels of government of the importance of direct community consultation, accessible multilingual communications and improved agency within Victoria’s diverse communities. Much progress has been made and the VMC continues to work with and advocate for the needs of our communities.



The Victorian COVID-19 response

The pandemic has underlined the critical role of organisations like the VMC as a trusted connection, relaying information between diverse communities and the government.

The VMC has been an indispensable part of Victoria's COVID-19 response. We have helped promote vital public health messages across complex intersections of cultures and faiths, while also advocating for the concerns and views of these communities to be considered in the government's ongoing response to the pandemic. We have shown up in person too, going above and beyond, working day and night and through the weekends, to support diverse communities during this challenging time.

It hasn't been easy.

This past year, culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians have suffered acutely from the damaging effects of the pandemic, including:

- ▶ unemployment and insecure work
- ▶ social isolation
- ▶ racism
- ▶ declines in mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ increasing barriers to accessing secure housing, food and education pathways
- ▶ poverty
- ▶ discrimination.

Public housing lockdowns

On 4 July 2020, in response to rising COVID-19 cases throughout Melbourne's public housing community, residents of nine North Melbourne and Flemington high rises were ordered to return to their units immediately and remain inside until they were given permission to leave. The orders differed from the constraints of other postcode lockdowns, as residents here were not allowed to exit their home for exercise, care, work or food without an exemption.

The arrangements needed to be implemented rapidly and this had several impacts. The visible

police presence was confronting for many and triggered past trauma for some residents who had experienced conflict, violence and persecution in their lives. Numerous residents lacked access to culturally appropriate food and medical necessities in their homes, while others did not have access to outdoor space for fresh air. There were fears for those facing mental health, family violence and drug and alcohol crises without adequate supports in place.

From day one, VMC commissioners and staff were present at the incident control centres in Flemington and North Melbourne – where they remained throughout the lockdown. Joined by several community organisations and leaders, we worked together to give culturally appropriate, in-language support to residents, along with essential food and medicine.

The VMC helped the Department of Health (DH) and other departmental staff increase their cultural competency and understanding of residents' needs. We provided information and emotional support to residents and encouraged them to comply with the restrictions and get tested.

We translated and disseminated public health messages through newsletters and resident social media groups. We assisted DH staff with doorknocking for welfare checks and testing, and helped recruit volunteers who could deliver in-language information in person as well. We let the residents speak and listened to their concerns, relaying them to DH, Victoria Police, State Emergency Services and other responders.

In all our work, we prioritised the needs of the Victorian Government's public health effort to fight the pandemic, as well as the rights of multicultural Victorians to respect and fairness. Our efforts had a measurable impact on the Victorian Government's



VMC Deputy Chairperson Bwe Thay, Community Representative Commissioner Mohammed Yassin and Chairperson Viv Nguyen at the Flemington public housing COVID-19 response centre.

objectives and forged essential relationships with local community members.

One year on and we continue to support the public housing residents at North Melbourne and Flemington, including partnering with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Paving the Way Forward program and helping inform their engagement and grants program. This grants program funds initiatives by local groups and organisations to solve issues and help promote safe, healthy and prosperous neighbourhoods.

'The VMC is providing excellent advocacy and support to multicultural communities. I think that's very important. I saw amazing work on display through the pandemic on a number of key issues – whether it be through crisis relief or the lockdowns. In the most difficult times, they were standing there with the community.'

– Ahmed Hassan, Executive Director, Youth Activating Youth, March 2021

Ongoing support

The coronavirus pandemic has remained an ongoing presence and cause of social upheaval over the last 12 months. In addition to Victoria's second lockdown, which continued for close to four months for many Melbourne residents, two further lockdowns took place in the reporting period.

In between these lockdowns, Victorians have lived under some form of new public health legislation. These orders have included mask-wearing, limits on visitors in homes and caps on attendance at events. All of us have had to adapt to the so-called 'new normal'. The VMC has been a trusted information provider throughout this time and has helped multicultural communities navigate this reality.

We have continued to work closely with diverse communities to promote public health messages and share their feedback with government. Some of our most concerted efforts have been to encourage community members with symptoms to isolate and get tested when displaying symptoms or when having met with COVID-positive people, as well as explaining and promoting the uptake of QR codes and the vaccine.

We have lobbied for this information to be delivered in-language and have supported DH in recruiting community and faith leaders to feature in public health campaigns. We have helped recruit hundreds of people who speak many different languages to door knock with DH representatives to encourage testing. We have also supported community groups to facilitate culturally-appropriate crisis food relief delivery and advocated for a government commitment to continue this support.

We also continue to advocate for the most vulnerable members of our multicultural society, such as refugees, asylum seekers and international students who have limited options for supports and assistance – and are often the least visible cohorts in our state.

Community consultations and forums

Hard lessons were learned in the first half of 2020. However, in the last 12 months, the Victorian Government and the VMC have refined and significantly improved engagement with Victoria's diverse communities, ensuring critical health messaging can address and overcome confusion and better serve the needs and preferences of these different communities.

There is great value in direct, personal consultation with multifaith and multicultural community leaders. The VMC and the Victorian Government have collaborated to help leaders better understand how the public health guidance and restrictions affect their community through an ever-growing list of online briefings and information sessions.

By providing respected leaders with up-to-date information and listening to the concerns and feedback of their communities, government has achieved better cut through for public health messages and forged a sense of mutual respect and understanding – while offering a single source of truth to community to dispel myths and misinformation that may be circulating.

In addition to public health, we gave community leaders information on QR codes, business recovery support, test and isolation payments, emergency relief and family recovery programs for affected individuals and businesses.

These consultations and community briefings are a clear example of the VMC's work as a bridge between the Victorian Government and the state's diverse communities. We support the general public's interest, work toward state government objectives and ensure the voices of the multicultural groups we represent are heard loud and clear.

Over 2020–2021, the VMC have been members and contributors of several interdepartmental working groups and Victorian Government taskforces with a focus on COVID-19, including:

- ▶ Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Communities COVID-19 Taskforce
- ▶ COVID-19 Community Outbreak Briefings and Vaccination Information, with over 30 sessions conducted
- ▶ COVID-19 local government area (LGA) partnerships across six culturally-diverse LGAs: Hume, Wyndham, Brimbank, Melton, Dandenong
- ▶ Community Voice and Co-design Working Group
- ▶ COVID-19 Communications and Translations Working Group
- ▶ COVID-19 and Youth Working Group
- ▶ CALD Health Advisory Panel
- ▶ High Risk Accommodation Working Group

We also supported the Victorian Government with additional COVID-19 webinars and roundtables for priority groups, distributed in-language resources to diverse communities and conducted further consultations with the VMC's Regional Advisory Councils, the Multifaith Advisory Group, members of the LGBTIQ+ multicultural community, people with disabilities from multicultural communities and the multicultural business community.

The VMC's general COVID-19 forums, presented in collaboration with the Department of Health, averaged 100 attendees per session. A snapshot of a VMC-led COVID-19 consultation delivered on 17 June 2021, revealed that attendees reported more than 50 different countries of birth and more than 60 different languages spoken at home.





VMC community engagement

We aim to elevate the voices of communities. As a conduit between multicultural communities and the Victorian Government, the VMC actively seeks to engage by encouraging direct consultation, feedback and participation. We provide evidence-based advice to government to inform policy, legislation and the delivery of government and community services.

The VMC contributes to government inquiries on matters affecting multicultural and multifaith communities that align with our legislative role and objectives. We raise emerging issues directly with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, government departments and agencies as needed.

Coronavirus response and recovery

COVID-19 added new layers of challenge for community engagement, especially within communities that may already have a mistrust of government and mainstream information channels.

Over 2020–2021 the VMC’s Community Engagement team, along with the Regional Advisory Council, focused primarily on COVID-19 response and recovery and the flow-on effects the pandemic has had on Victoria’s multicultural, multifaith and multilingual groups.

During Victoria’s second wave, Premier Daniel Andrews announced an additional \$14.3 million to reach out to more culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians to ensure they get the support they need, when they need it.

With the arrival of critical funding from the Premier Victoria’s second wave to support culturally and



The VMC has run many community forums addressing the pandemic. These sessions allowed diverse communities to connect with the Department of Health and better understand restrictions, testing, public health guidance, QR codes and the vaccination rollout.

linguistically diverse communities, we were able to activate key multicultural organisations working on the ground to deliver emergency relief, such as culturally-specific accommodation and food for those self-isolating or in quarantine.

The VMC helped to ensure that grassroots organisations with strong, authentic connections to the communities they represent received funding to carry out their vital work.

At the same time, the VMC joined with the Department of Health and the newly formed CALD Communities Taskforce to host a series of virtual community roundtables, share the latest health information, disseminate translated materials and build trust across the state's multicultural communities.

These roundtables presented a crucial opportunity to better understand community needs in real time and then take these lessons back to government to be implemented in policies and plans.

In the face of unprecedented challenges and complex circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened new doors for how we engage with communities, escalate and confront issues affecting them and get vital messages from the source to its intended targets.

Working for Victoria Fund – VMC support for consortiums

Throughout 2020, the VMC provided ongoing governance support to two consortiums formed to respond to the unique challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has posed for culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities across Victoria.

One of the consortiums, Cultural Connections Victoria, was led by the Islamic Council of Victoria and comprised nine community service organisations including:

- ▶ Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)
- ▶ Jewishcare
- ▶ Indiancare
- ▶ Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR)
- ▶ PRONIA
- ▶ Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA)
- ▶ African Family Services (AFS)
- ▶ Sikh Australian Support for Family Violence (SASFV).

The second consortium was the Spectrum CALD Communities Working for Victoria Collaboration. Spectrum led a collaboration of 11 local and multicultural agencies to deliver tailored, localised place-based supports for the specific needs of their CALD communities. These agencies included:

- ▶ Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)
- ▶ Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
- ▶ Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District
- ▶ Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
- ▶ Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
- ▶ Diversitat (Geelong)
- ▶ Whittlesea Community Connections
- ▶ Australian Vietnamese Women's Association Inc
- ▶ inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- ▶ AllGraduates Translational Services.

The first of its kind in Victoria – if not Australia – the focus of the alliances is culturally and religiously appropriate responses and support using grassroots community connection. Community data suggests that the potential reach of these alliances is over 500,000 Victorians.

The Working for Victoria program demonstrated the benefits of communities partnering together to deliver larger scale programs with shared resources and knowledge, and proved that it is the members of communities who know their communities best.

Support for farmers and seasonal workers

The VMC provided support to the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions' Agriculture Victoria team in responding to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agricultural sector. As a result of the pandemic, the industry has seen a devastating impact to its workforce, which has heavily relied on seasonal workers – often from overseas.

The VMC helped advise and collaborated with Agriculture Victoria to run information sessions for CALD communities interested in pursuing a career in agriculture. The VMC connected new and emerging communities and jobseekers with:

- ▶ prospective employment opportunities in the sector
- ▶ supports available to ensure they are aware of their rights and safety.

Consultation, advocacy and reporting

Racism information sessions with VEOHRC

Over the month of September, we delivered 10 information sessions online, in partnership with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), Victoria Police and other community organisations. This was in response to increased incidents of racism experienced by migrants and people of colour during the COVID-19 pandemic. We worked with several key community leaders and multicultural legal networks to co-design and deliver the sessions.

Our partners provided cultural context and offered a level of understanding for the complexities of individuals reporting racism. The broad objectives of the project were to:

- ▶ increase the awareness of community leaders and advocates on their rights
- ▶ empower vulnerable communities experiencing racism, discrimination and vilification
- ▶ increase people's reporting of these incidents
- ▶ strengthen the evidence base of racism in Victoria through increased reporting
- ▶ continue to advocate strongly for increased legal protection of people experiencing vilification.

Some community groups and individuals included:

- ▶ African Australian Legal Network
- ▶ Asian Australian Lawyers Association (AALA)
- ▶ Centre for Multicultural Youth
- ▶ Islamic Council of Victoria
- ▶ Muslim Legal Network
- ▶ Nyadol Nyuon
- ▶ United Pasifika Council of Victoria
- ▶ Various leaders from communities of Myanmar

The VMC and VEOHRC selected nine communities to tailor and deliver bespoke information sessions to. Communities included:

- ▶ Asian communities
- ▶ African communities
- ▶ South Sudanese women
- ▶ Muslim communities
- ▶ Muslim women
- ▶ South Asian communities
- ▶ Māori and Pasifika communities
- ▶ youth
- ▶ communities of Myanmar

In addition to the community sessions, a racism information webinar for the broader multicultural and multifaith community was held. The webinar was co-hosted by VEOHRC commissioner Kristen Hilton and VMC Chairperson Viv Nguyen, with an address by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Ros Spence.

A total of 246 participants attended the sessions and several key issues were identified.

- ▶ COVID-19 inspired racial discrimination and vilification was not confined to people of Asian appearance. Many people felt that the media's reporting of the second wave of the pandemic blamed multicultural and multifaith communities for spreading the virus. This type of reporting had the potential to incite racist behaviour towards South Asian, Muslim and African communities.
- ▶ Unemployment and underemployment were further exacerbated in multicultural communities since the start of the pandemic, especially in newly arrived or vulnerable cohorts. In response, the VMC took measures to address this issue and to advance multicultural employment in the context of COVID-19 recovery.

VMC Employment Working Group report

The VMC led a time-limited working group comprising community and industry leaders with relevant knowledge and expertise to help inform the VMC on priority areas of focus for the COVID-19 recovery phase.

The final report summarised the discussions, findings and recommendations of the working group to support greater participation in the employment market and avenues for greater job creation. Some findings included:

- ▶ the need for greater collaboration across government departments to strengthen social procurement frameworks and adherence
- ▶ collaborating with Jobs Victoria on initiatives designed to reduce barriers to employment
- ▶ introducing targets in particular areas of extreme vulnerability, such as large single-parent families, new arrivals or public housing.

VMC youth employment report – ‘Meet me in the middle’

This report, released in November 2020, highlighted the challenges and opportunities facing young people from culturally diverse backgrounds within the current and post-COVID-19 Victorian employment market. It also identified opportunities for targeted supports to help this group find meaningful and sustainable employment in the future.

Insights from the report were directly informed by young people and members of industry. Recommendations included:

- ▶ the establishment of local employment taskforces and employment targets for culturally and linguistically diverse youth within Victorian Government
- ▶ a review of current pre-employment programs funded by Victorian Government
- ▶ the adoption of recruitment targets for multicultural youth.

Upon the release of the report, the Melbourne Youth Alliance (MYA) held a ‘Meet me in the middle’ event during Youth Week. Young people and professionals shared their experiences and ideas on how to strengthen employment pathways post-COVID-19.

Following this, the City of Melbourne – in partnership with The Huddle and VMC – supported the MYA in planning and delivering a program to help young jobseekers meet prospective employers and share ideas on how to find opportunities together as Victoria works toward economic and social recovery.

Ombudsman investigation into the detention and treatment of public housing residents

In July 2020, the Victorian Ombudsman announced an investigation into the detention and treatment of public housing residents at 33 Alfred St, North Melbourne due to COVID-19.

In consultation with the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the Ombudsman worked with community leaders and public housing residents to strengthen trust and engagement, as well as developing and implementing measures to better protect their rights and amplify their voices.

Recommendations included:

- ▶ establish improved and culturally-safe recording of data on public housing residents
- ▶ include primary or preferred language and country-of-origin information
- ▶ develop and maintain partnerships with community leaders and residents to support timely, trusted communication with people living in public housing
- ▶ increase participation of multicultural communities in policy, planning and project activities relating to public housing.

Greater Shepparton Cultural Inclusion Roundtable

The Greater Shepparton Cultural Inclusion Roundtable was established to consider strategies and actions that would strengthen cultural inclusion across the Shepparton community and reinforce and support inclusion initiatives in local schools.

The roundtable held its first meeting in April 2021. It brought together representatives from:

- ▶ local multicultural and Aboriginal communities
- ▶ Victorian Multicultural Commission
- ▶ Greater Shepparton City Council
- ▶ Greater Shepparton Secondary College
- ▶ key government departments and agencies.

It was co-chaired by VMC Chairperson Viv Nguyen and Point of Difference Studio Executive Manager, Betul Tuna.

Submissions made by the VMC in 2020–2021

Since July 2020, the VMC has produced a range of submissions and responded to inquiries on matters affecting Victoria's multicultural communities. The VMC has drawn from feedback and advice provided by our Regional Advisory Councils and community consultations to inform these responses and to formulate evidence-based recommendations.

Responses and submissions that VMC provided

- ▶ Monitoring the family violence reforms supplementary submission, August 2020
- ▶ Inquiry into COVID-19 contact tracing system and testing regime, November 2020
- ▶ Submission to the Royal Commission on Mental Health, December 2020
- ▶ Victorian Law Reform Commission Improving the response of the justice system to sexual offences, January 2021
- ▶ Victorian Government's youth strategy, January 2021
- ▶ Planning Australia's 2021–2022 migration program to Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs, February 2021
- ▶ Senate Select Committee on Job Security, April 2021
- ▶ Victorian Government's *Social and community housing strategy*, April 2021
- ▶ Input into the DJCS's Review of the Victorian Government's Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, June 2021

Case studies

Submission to the Royal Commission on Mental Health, December 2020

In June 2020, the Productivity Commission's inquiry report on mental health highlighted the critical importance of adequately addressing mental health issues for our multicultural society.

In December 2020, the VMC made a series of recommendations to the Royal Commission on Mental Health, which included improving data collation and research on cultural diversity to accurately understand the mental health needs of multicultural, multifaith and multilingual groups and appropriately target resources to them.

Our recommendations also included:

- ▶ improving cultural competency
- ▶ mandating the use of interpreters
- ▶ bolstering workforce diversity in the mental health sector, including setting targets and employing bi-cultural workers to better meet the diverse needs of individuals in the state.

The VMC also emphasised the need for incorporating ethno-specific and multicultural community organisations and service providers as critical and complementary parts of the proposed reforms (including within the new governance structure) in the design of programs and in the implementation of service delivery.

Victorian Youth Strategy, January 2021

The Victorian Multicultural Commission was invited by the Office of Youth to make a submission to the Victorian Government's youth strategy. The VMC's submission was informed by community feedback collated through various community engagement platforms, including a range of direct consultations with young people from multicultural and multi-faith backgrounds and through VMC's Regional Advisory Councils.

Our submission strongly advocated for a whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs by prioritising cultural responsiveness and inclusiveness be embedded in appropriate services, supports and infrastructure available to youth. This included a review of government, community and youth services (such as Centrelink, MyGov, VET and TAFE) to address the barriers of low cultural competency, inadequate in-language resources and perceived taboos, stigmas and stereotypes experienced by multicultural youth.

Our submission also advocated for:

- ▶ the need to directly address racism, vilification and discrimination in schools
- ▶ better data collection on racism in education settings
- ▶ supports to be in place for students and parents to raise incidents and concerns.

We highlighted the need to increase availability of online programs for multicultural youth to strengthen skills, showcase talent and build social cohesion. We also raised the importance of having bilingual schools in preserving and promoting languages and cultural heritage.

Planning Australia's 2021–2022 migration program – to Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs, February 2021

In response to the Department of Home Affairs' 2021–2022 migration program, the VMC made a series of recommendations that addressed key issues around the economy, Australia's post-COVID-19 recovery, emerging national skill and labour shortages, and accessibility of opportunities for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The VMC proposed that facilitating efficient and strategic pathways to permanent migration in Australia would support economic recovery post-COVID19 and help restore social cohesion.

The VMC indicated that providing more accessible pathways towards permanent visas for existing onshore temporary visa holders and asylum seekers could meaningfully and effectively address current critical job shortages due to border closures and create more jobs in the long term.

To foster better social cohesion and a sense of belonging, the VMC endorsed improved funding and activation of migrant settlement service delivery systems, multicultural community organisations, ethno-specific organisations and local grassroots communities.

VMC digital engagement

Much like everyone else, we had to adapt over the last year to ensure we could connect with our audiences as well as reach new ones – individuals, local grassroots groups, service providers and community leaders we didn't already have links to.

While the pandemic disproportionately affected multicultural communities in many ways that we are still understanding, it also shone a light on the need for government messaging to rethink content and to work directly with communities to reach our audiences in the digital spaces they are already in.

We learned that the messenger matters. Whether it's an in-language video of a bicultural health worker explaining why you should get vaccinated, a community leader from a mosque speaking about the challenges of celebrating Eid during lockdown, or an authentic message from one young person to their fellow peers, we know that our audiences want to hear from trusted, relatable voices. The VMC is fortunate that our commissioners and chairperson are considered trusted voices. Because of this, they were able to deliver important information at critical times.

We learned – and continue to learn – as we engage with our communities, partners and audiences. We know that lengthy government approval processes can impact the timely distribution of information – and this has flow-on effects for all of us.

At the VMC we worked hard to release information on our digital channels that was timely, in plain language and, when necessary, either translated or included easy-to-understand infographics and pictorials.

VMConnect

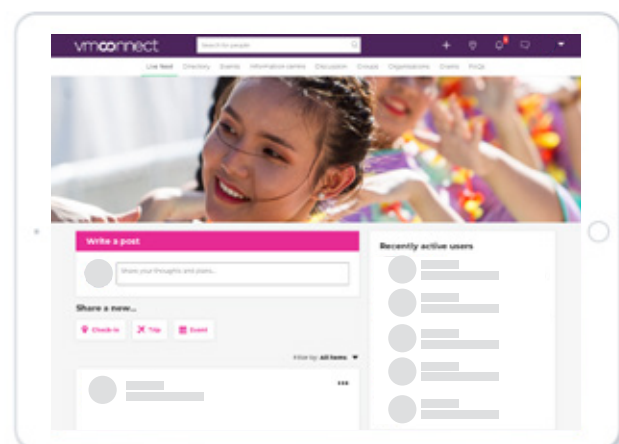
VMConnect is the VMC's online stakeholder engagement platform used by members of the community to:

- ▶ share regular updates on various topics
- ▶ seek feedback
- ▶ contribute insights into local activities, challenges, concerns and opportunities.

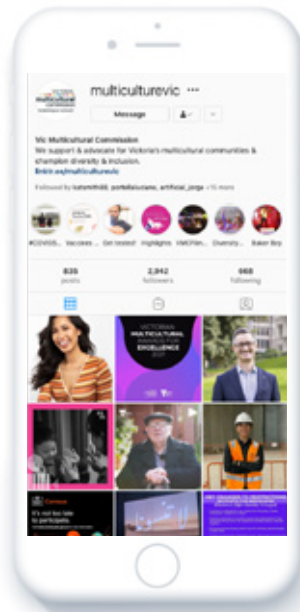
As a thriving online community where members engage directly with their partners across the state, it was indispensable during the previous year when new messages and information needed to be accessed freely and easily in real time.

VMConnect was originally sourced as an online place for our Regional Advisory Council (RAC) members to talk to the Commission, members from their own RAC group and the wider RAC program more regularly. During COVID-19 it was expanded to include other stakeholder groups. The feedback we received showed that it was a great space to find information relevant to multicultural communities in one place.

Recognising the value of this platform, the VMC partnered with various departments and agencies in 2020–2021 to help them to create their own groups on VMConnect. This included a CALD Communities Local Partnerships network and a Bicultural Workers Community of Practice group with the DFFH and DH, and a COVID-19 Anti-Racism Roundtable group with our partners at VEOHRC.



VMConnect gives diverse community leaders the opportunity to discuss important cross-cultural issues.



The VMC's social media platforms achieved historic highs in both engagement and impressions this year.

Social media and subscriber newsletters

The VMC's social media platforms have proven to be an effective way to meet our strategic priorities of promoting, celebrating, advocating for and providing leadership for Victoria's multicultural communities. Throughout 2020–2021, we used Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, as well as the VMC Chairperson's Facebook and LinkedIn accounts, to inform, engage with and activate our audiences. From sharing essential COVID-19 messaging, information about cultural events, grant opportunities and government programs to highlighting stories about some of our multicultural community champions who are achieving great things across our state.

Our weekly 'Community Update' and 'Monthly Reflections' email newsletters are sent to a subscriber base of more than 5,000 members across Victoria. In these bulletins, we communicate important messages and essential updates on restrictions and current public health guidelines that may be in place. We also deliver community news, covering our events and activities, any grants and financial supports that are available, and programs or services for people experiencing issues with mental health, family violence, racism and employment. Our newsletters cross-promote government and grassroots partners and are also a source of good news stories, featuring individuals and groups in the community worthy of recognition.

Data on VMC's digital engagement in 2020–2021

- ▶ Impressions across all platforms: **6,660,758**, a **442%** increase from the previous year
- ▶ Engagements across all platforms: **543,488**, a **787%** increase from the previous year
- ▶ Clicks on social media post links: **63,970**, a **1146.7%** increase from the previous year
- ▶ Audience size across platforms: **20,381**. We grew our audience by **4,319** users, which is a **37.7%** net audience increase from the previous year
- ▶ LinkedIn provided the highest level of growth for the VMC in 2020–2021 as we concentrated on expanding our reach to other government departments and culturally diverse organisations. Our audience grew **130.1%** from the previous year
- ▶ Total VMC posts and messages sent: **1,746** – a **60.8%** increase from the previous year
- ▶ Total messages and comments received on our social platforms: **4,758** – a **34.7%** increase from the previous year
- ▶ Notably, our engagement rate was **8.2%**, a **63.8%** increase on the previous year. We not only increased our output but made a measurable impact on our community with content and information that they wanted to engage with
- ▶ Total sessions on VMC website: **102,767**, up **816.6%** from the previous year
- ▶ Visitor profile on VMC website: **28%** returning visitors to **72%** new visitors
- ▶ Web sessions by members of the VPS were up **1790%** from the previous year
- ▶ Number of emails sent to VMC subscribers: **105**



The VMC's eyes and ears on the ground

Apart from hosting community-specific, issue-specific and place-based consultations on issues affecting our state's diverse communities, the Victorian Multicultural Commission is informed by:

- ▶ eight Regional Advisory Councils across Victoria (three metropolitan and five regional councils) with more than 250 members drawn from their respective local areas to represent their communities
- ▶ the Multifaith Advisory Group, with representatives from more than 25 faith organisations and peak bodies
- ▶ the Multicultural Chamber of Commerce Group, with more than 30 community specific chambers of commerce and business sector representatives.

With more than 250 members across eight regions, the RACs are a local platform for communities to directly give us information on matters relating to health, education, employment, personal wellbeing, relationships and community harmony.

Each RAC is chaired by a VMC commissioner, who works closely with up to 50 members representing diverse cultural backgrounds, faiths, sectors and ages. Members include local community leaders and representatives, local government representatives, businesspeople and service providers from ethno-specific, faith-based and mainstream non-government organisations.

Appointed through a public expression-of-interest process, RAC members are volunteers who serve for up to three years. The current members were appointed in October 2019.

The VMC thanks its past and present RAC members for their commitment and contributions.

Regional Advisory Councils

Our eight Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) give us critical information and intelligence gathered directly from grassroots communities to inform the advice we provide to government.



RAC members are the VMC's eyes and ears on the ground. They keep us up to date on issues arising in their regions.

Our Regional Advisory Councils were key contributors to the Victorian Government's COVID-19 response.



RAC members identified cultural gaps and sensitivities in proposed public health guidance and business support programs.

They also helped disseminate this vital information to diverse communities.



Multifaith Advisory Group members came together throughout the year to stand in solidarity on many important issues.

Multifaith Advisory Group

Since it was first established in 2008, the Multifaith Advisory Group (MAG) has brought Victoria's faith leaders together in ongoing dialogue with the Victorian Government and to respond to issues of the day.

Convened by the VMC and chaired by the VMC Chairperson, the group comprises 25 senior representatives from Victoria's diverse faith communities, including various Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i communities.

Over the last 12 months, the Multifaith Advisory Group has hosted weekly prayer and meditation vigils and released seven statements in support of important causes.

The MAG has:

- ▶ united to condemn reports of an increase in racist attacks in Victoria
- ▶ stood in solidarity with families affected by the devastating surge in COVID-19 deaths in India
- ▶ expressed concern for the welfare of public housing residents in Flemington and North Melbourne through the July 2020 lockdowns.

The MAG also produced the short film, 'Unity in Diversity'. In the 20-minute video, MAG members quoted scripture to demonstrate how their faith encourages harmony between different religions and cultures.



Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Group

Bringing together more than 30 Victorian chambers, the VMC Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Group promotes economic and employment opportunities for diverse Victorians, including new and emerging communities. By fostering an exchange of ideas and information between members, the group represents unity across cultures and businesses.

The group informs the VMC's advice to the Minister of Multicultural Affairs on challenges facing diverse business owners and the VMC facilitates engagement between members and the Victorian Government.

In 2020, a roundtable discussion provided critical insights into the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses owned by Victoria's multicultural communities. The group also discussed how the Victorian Government can better support businesses with the Victorian Small Business commissioner and representatives from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

Throughout the pandemic, the VMC has sent timely and important information to members on business support for multicultural communities and advocated for more translated and in-language resources for Victorian businesses.



The VMC stakeholder cocktail event featured spectacular performances inspired by the cultural traditions of many different countries.

VMC events

We proudly foster social harmony and promote our state's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity through an exciting program of events each year. This remained the case throughout 2020–2021, as we adapted and innovated in the face of public health restrictions.

Cultural Diversity Week

Cultural Diversity Week is celebrated annually in Victoria over a week falling around March 21. This is the date of Australia's Harmony Day as well as the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

With the COVID-forced cancellation of last year's Cultural Diversity Week events and all the disappointment it caused, the VMC came together and got creative for the rollout of celebrations in 2021.

When many people think of Cultural Diversity Week (CDW), the VMC's festival day at Federation Square comes to mind. The occasion typically brings tens of thousands of Victorians together to celebrate and share our state's diverse cultures through food, music and dance. It's always a special day. However, in a time of social distancing and adherence to COVIDSafe guidelines, a rethink was necessary.

As a result, our 2021 CDW celebrations centred around hybrid events. We developed a public lecture series, called Curious Conversations, which would inspire crucial discussion regardless of restrictions; our commissioners supported and spoke at many community events, both virtually and in person when possible; and we hosted Culture Break, a series of 12 short concerts held safely across the Melbourne CBD.

Curious Conversations

The theme of CDW for 2021 was in the form of a question: 'What does multicultural Victoria look like in 2030?'. We knew this was ripe for spirited debate and felt a panel-style public lecture was the perfect format to kick it off.

Curious Conversations gave a range of notable Victorians the chance to outline their vision of a thriving multicultural state. The panels, held monthly

at the Wheeler Centre, were streamed live via the VMC Facebook page and were led by questions from the facilitator as well as the audience.

In devising topics for each session, we invited experts and thought leaders in specific areas of public life to discuss the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead. Starting with a youth panel in March, this was followed by local government in April, justice in May and refugee advocacy in June.

We're pleased to report that the format captured the interest of Victorians, with streams garnering more than 6,000 views and hundreds of comments. We will continue this series throughout 2021 with more topics to cover, such as media, First Nations and workplace diversity.

We thank all our speakers, as well as everyone who posted their own questions and ideas for advancing multiculturalism in the coming decade.



VMC Commissioner Shankar Kasynathan and Dr Stephane Shepherd at the Curious Conversations 'Justice' session.



The VMC collaborated with Multicultural Arts Victoria for Cultural Diversity Week, creating 'Culture Break', a series of pop-up performances from diverse artists.

Culture Break

The VMC was thrilled to partner with Multicultural Arts Victoria and the City of Melbourne to deliver Culture Break, a series of free outdoor concerts to celebrate Victoria's diverse creative talent.

Culture Break took place across two days during Cultural Diversity Week. Concert spaces were set up on the Old Treasury Building steps and in the State Library forecourt.

Attendees and passers-by were treated to superb performances from some of our state's best emerging artists from multicultural backgrounds. Many of the musicians shared work that was inspired by their own cultural heritage – from Brazil to Senegal, from India to France and many stops in between.

Community events

Although the VMC leads Victoria's Cultural Diversity Week, there is always far more to the celebration than just the events we host.

Each year, we encourage Victoria's multicultural community groups to organise their own festivities throughout the week. We promote and support a broad range of public cultural events that celebrate traditional food, heritage and music. The Victorian Government also provides generous grants to subsidise many of these.

This year's Cultural Diversity Week was absolutely packed with memorable community events.

A world kitchen cook-off at Swinburne University, an African food and music festival at the Immigration Museum and an inter-cultural harmony panel morning tea are just a handful of the events our commissioners attended across the state.

We look forward to supporting our diverse communities next year as they come up with even bigger and better celebrations.

VMC stakeholder event

In May 2021, the VMC hosted a stakeholder cocktail event at the Melbourne Immigration Museum. The night brought together some of our existing partners while inviting new organisations and collaborators to learn about our work and join in supporting our events in 2021 and beyond.

More than 100 partners, sponsors and friends of the VMC came along, including the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Ros Spence, to celebrate face-to-face and witness some spectacular performances. There were Nepalese and Latin American dancers, music acts featuring a kora, concert harp, guitar and trumpet, as well as an electrifying drum-off between Indian, Senegalese and Aboriginal musicians.



Liana Perillo and Fabian Aravelés performed as Pêrolas at the stakeholder cocktail event.

Refugee Week and the Victorian Refugee Awards

Refugee Week is a national celebration of the achievements and contributions of refugees to Australia. Now in its 35th year, the week also raises awareness about important issues currently affecting refugees and asylum seekers.

The VMC encourages Victorians to get involved every year by organising or attending events. By attending meetups, feasts and exhibitions, we celebrate people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and take part in vital conversations.

This year, we funded a range of community events across Victoria to celebrate and share refugee stories, which were run in coordination with the VMC Regional Advisory Councils. We also brought back the Victorian Refugee Awards.

The Victorian Refugee Awards shine a light on people in our community who were forced to flee from their home in search of protection. People who arrived in Australia recently, along with established community members who once settled here as refugees or asylum seekers, were all eligible for nomination.

Due to lockdowns, we had to postpone our Victorian Refugee Awards ceremony. Recipients of these awards were announced online in June and we await a safe time to hold an in-person celebration in their honour. More on the awards can be found on the VMC website's 2021 Victorian Refugee Award recipients page.

Multicultural Awards for Excellence

Innumerable Victorians have done incredible work to champion and protect multiculturalism since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. These people were not asking for recognition, but it's rewarding when it comes.

While we knew we wouldn't be able to come together in person, the VMC hosted the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence in 2020 to acknowledge and celebrate these people. To announce the winners, we took on the challenge to innovate beyond the traditional gala dinner format. In its place, we held a presentation ceremony that was streamed live on both Channel 31 and the VMC's Facebook page.

In all, there were a record 452 nominations across 15 categories for our 2020 Multicultural Awards for Excellence and all the proud winners received their medallions by post.

Chairperson and commissioner-attended events

In addition to the significant work of our VMC commissioners and that of our Deputy Chairperson and Chairperson, there is also a great community desire for their attendance at events hosted by multicultural community and multifaith groups.

Movement restrictions and public health guidance meant many of the events our representatives were invited to in the last 12 months were postponed or moved online. Nevertheless, VMC commissioners and staff attended more than 100 events, giving speeches at many of them.

A small sample of some of the events we were fortunate enough to attend over the past year includes:

- ▶ Australian Chollo Annual Cultural Festival
- ▶ Greek Independence Day
- ▶ Tamil New Year
- ▶ African Day Gala Dinner
- ▶ Fijian Women's Dinner
- ▶ Karenni Kay Htoe Boe Festival
- ▶ Baisakhi Volunteer Appreciation Day
- ▶ AMAFHH Iftar Dinner
- ▶ International Women's Day
- ▶ Ramadan celebrations
- ▶ Hindu Nav Varsh
- ▶ Ethiopian Women's Alliance Mother's Day
- ▶ Pakistan Halal Food Carnival
- ▶ Lunar New Year.

Cancelled events

While we made every effort to keep the VMC events program alive in new and innovative formats throughout the pandemic, some projects proved unfeasible. We had to put on hold both the Multicultural Film Festival and the Premier's Gala Dinner for 2020.

The 2021 Multicultural Film Festival was held online in August 2021 and we look forward to reviving the Premier's Gala Dinner when the time is right.



Appendix

2020–2021 grant recipients

Community Support Fund grant recipients

Recipient	Amount
Coburg Mosque Book – Turkish Heritage Society Australia Ltd	\$10,000
North Sunshine NAIDOC Awareness Week Game – North Sunshine Football Club	\$2,500
Her Voice: Greek Women and their Friends – Food for Thought Network	\$5,000

Refugee Week grant recipients

Recipient	Amount
Hello My Buddy – United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley	\$5,000
Strengthening our Diversity – Refugee Communities Association of Australia	\$5,000
Refugee Welcome Packs – Hume Regional Advisory Council Ethnic Council of Shepparton and Districts	\$5,000
Refugee Week Dinner Mount Macedon – Neighbourhood Collective Australia	\$2,858
WASEMA Network and Refugee Week Celebration – Women’s Association South East Melbourne Australia	\$5,000
Refugee Week Dinner Mount Alexander – Neighbourhood Collective Australia	\$2,858
Refugee Week Bendigo – Neighbourhood Collective Australia	\$4,308
Celebration of World Refugee Day – International Council of Engineers Australia	\$5,000
Supporting Job Seeking and Career Development of People from a Refugee Background During the Pandemic – Deakin University	\$5,000
Eastern Region Refugee Week Event – Communities Council of Ethnic Issues Inc	\$5,000

Multifaith Advisory Group grant recipients

Recipient	Amount
South Sudanese Holistic Care – All Nations Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia	\$10,000
AMAFHH Federation – AMAFHH Federation	\$10,000
Building a whole-of-Church response to Domestic and Family Violence – Catholic Social Services Victoria	\$10,000
Supporting the Russian Community – Dandenong Parish of the Russian Orthodox Church (Abroad)	\$10,000
Faith Communities Council of Victoria Multifaith Project – Faith Communities Council of Victoria Inc	\$10,000
Faith Communities Preventing Family Violence FaithSAFE Project – FCCV Education and Training	\$40,000
Multifaith Funding – Hindu Council of Australia (VIC)	\$10,000
Stories Beyond COVID: A Celebration of Life – Islamic Council of Victoria Inc	\$10,000
MAG 2020–2021 Grants Program – Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV)	\$10,000
RCV MAG Support – Rabbinical Council of Victoria	\$10,000
Ministry to South Sudanese – St John’s Lutheran Church Geelong	\$10,000
Mental Wellbeing and Awareness Program supporting vulnerable groups within Chinese communities – St Timothy’s Anglican Church Bulleen	\$10,000
Interfaith Services and Spiritual Wellbeing – The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne	\$10,000

Regional Advisory Council Members 2020–2021

Barwon South West

- ▶ Emmanuel Akinpelu
- ▶ Moo Thay Wyar Blue
- ▶ Bakulikira Byakweli
- ▶ Matin Ghayour Minaie
- ▶ Mukhles Habash
- ▶ Prehashini Jeevaretnam
- ▶ Patricia Kimtia
- ▶ Michael Martinez
- ▶ Nelson
- ▶ Danielle Parker
- ▶ Mutheinchri Ra
- ▶ Habiba Zafari
- ▶ Helen Nicholls-Stary
- ▶ Gyanendra Upreti
- ▶ Moshtagh Heidari

Gippsland

- ▶ Yumna Ahmed
- ▶ Nurul Bhuiyan
- ▶ Farhat Firdous
- ▶ Jenny Horner
- ▶ Soula Kanellopoulos
- ▶ Amina Khatun
- ▶ Christine Lee
- ▶ Jason Lee
- ▶ J Murray Lobley
- ▶ Remi Nurudeen Ogunsina
- ▶ Ami Pathak
- ▶ Tania Ryan
- ▶ Mohammed Shareef

Grampians

- ▶ Michael Akindeju
- ▶ Angela Bijimba
- ▶ Karissa Cribbes
- ▶ Mona Hatwal
- ▶ Irene Hughes
- ▶ Manzoor Mian
- ▶ John Millington
- ▶ Meeta Narsi
- ▶ Monsour Obadina
- ▶ Frances Salenga
- ▶ Sid Tegally
- ▶ Jessica Trijsburg

Hume

- ▶ Liaqat Ahmadi
- ▶ Fayyaz Akhtar
- ▶ Sam Atukorala
- ▶ Rhonda Chrisanthou
- ▶ Lorna Gillespie
- ▶ Tony Hardham
- ▶ Paul Irungu
- ▶ Rupinder Kaur
- ▶ Omeni Ndlovu
- ▶ Sara Noori
- ▶ Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe
- ▶ Charles Oguntade
- ▶ Penelope Vine
- ▶ Sarmed Yassin

Loddon Mallee

- ▶ Steven Abbott
- ▶ Moustafa Al-Rawi
- ▶ Ernest Antoine
- ▶ Nay Chee Aung
- ▶ Abhishek Awasthi
- ▶ Zahir Azimi
- ▶ Joelle Brown
- ▶ Miriam Casas
- ▶ Kaye Graves
- ▶ Jemima Lotika
- ▶ Kate Steenvoorden
- ▶ Pacifique Ndayisaba
- ▶ Aisha Neelam
- ▶ Joby Sebastian
- ▶ Rosita Vincent
- ▶ Dean Wickham

Eastern Metropolitan

- ▶ Raju Adhikari
- ▶ June Anderson
- ▶ Donna Askew
- ▶ Gergis Ayoub
- ▶ Bala Balachandran
- ▶ Suresh Bendone Ramachandaiah
- ▶ Michelle Brewty
- ▶ Rufina Chan
- ▶ Rana Ebrahimi
- ▶ Marie Gina Etienne
- ▶ Helen Forbes-Mewett

- ▶ Cherie Fung
- ▶ Bernadette Goulding
- ▶ Mohit Gupta
- ▶ Cindy He
- ▶ Roger Li
- ▶ Imptiaz Mohamed
- ▶ Mithun Nambiar
- ▶ Barry Nguyen
- ▶ Danny Ong
- ▶ Saarah Ozeer
- ▶ Vicky Paradisis
- ▶ Eunjin Park
- ▶ Simon Sang Hre
- ▶ Kiran Shah
- ▶ Stephane Shepherd
- ▶ Eva Simo
- ▶ Siva Sivagnanam
- ▶ Tina Stathopoulos
- ▶ Sabaratnam Sundaramoorthy
- ▶ Philip Tan
- ▶ Viji Tangirala
- ▶ James Thangman
- ▶ Adwin Town
- ▶ Pritida Vinod
- ▶ Wilfred Wang
- ▶ Stephen Chun Weng Yin
- ▶ Jane Wonu Ogbah

Southern Metropolitan

- ▶ Rakesh Auplish
- ▶ Komi Bana
- ▶ Manisha Beniwal
- ▶ Georgia Benjamin
- ▶ Eunhee Bernstein
- ▶ Roshan Bhandary
- ▶ Edith Maria Campbell
- ▶ Alba Chliakhtine
- ▶ Rumi Commons
- ▶ Cristina De Souza Taylor
- ▶ Puja Dhawan
- ▶ Angela Di Stella
- ▶ Lan Diep
- ▶ Fahim Farooq
- ▶ Dabessa Gemelal
- ▶ Selba Gondoza Luka
- ▶ Nizar Hajj

- ▶ Simon Ho
- ▶ Rashi Kapoor
- ▶ Alexander Kats
- ▶ Shashi Kochhar
- ▶ Deng Kor
- ▶ Marek Krol
- ▶ Vishwa Kumar
- ▶ Susan Levkovski
- ▶ Nancy Loomba
- ▶ Girish Madhavan Pillai
- ▶ Mata Tuerei Mani
- ▶ Sugu Maran
- ▶ Nabila Marzouk
- ▶ Urvi Mehta
- ▶ Ana Lucia Mello
- ▶ Kasuni Mendis
- ▶ Aanchal Meshram
- ▶ Weda Mohseni
- ▶ Rabecca Mphande
- ▶ Phoebe Mwanza
- ▶ Suriakumarie Naidoo
- ▶ Marlo Newton
- ▶ Holger Nord
- ▶ Brian Oates
- ▶ Erdinc Ozyurek
- ▶ Yogi Patel
- ▶ Qiujiing Pu
- ▶ Angela Ristuccia-Cafarella
- ▶ Gangotri Roy
- ▶ Reasmey Sab
- ▶ Paul Saluni
- ▶ Swathi Shanmukhasundaram
- ▶ Devendra Singh
- ▶ Jamel Kaur Singh
- ▶ Anthony Siliato Sofe
- ▶ Suwarsih Nika
- ▶ Shaji Varghese
- ▶ Grissel Walmaggia
- ▶ George Wan
- ▶ Huiting Wei
- ▶ Debbie Wiener
- ▶ Jeswynn Yogaratnam
- ▶ Helen Alexis
- ▶ Harriet Xavier
- ▶ Jasbir Singh Suropada
- ▶ John Zeleznikow

North West Metropolitan

- ▶ Mohammad Abdullah
- ▶ Roomanna Abdulrahman
- ▶ Robert Aduer
- ▶ Muhammad Nabeel Akhlaq
- ▶ Doaah Albatat
- ▶ Faten Alhelow
- ▶ Ponniah Anandajayasekeram
- ▶ Shanthi Antony
- ▶ Michael Apout
- ▶ Loretta Asquini
- ▶ Ajmal Awan
- ▶ Pullareddy Baddam
- ▶ Aroshi Bandarawatte
- ▶ Ross Barnett
- ▶ Bethel Belay
- ▶ Miguel Belmar
- ▶ Biong
- ▶ Andy Chan
- ▶ Ivan Chan
- ▶ Upul Chandana
- ▶ Ritesh Chugh
- ▶ Sherrine Clark
- ▶ Preeti Daga
- ▶ Baker Dawas
- ▶ Teresa De Fazio
- ▶ Hamza Dhedhy
- ▶ Laura Di Pasquale
- ▶ Jack Djoric
- ▶ Nikki Efremidis
- ▶ Vinea Fuimaono
- ▶ Tara Gaire
- ▶ Orlando Gibson
- ▶ Batul Fatima Gulani
- ▶ Puneet Gulati
- ▶ Amrita Gurung
- ▶ Amer Hagos
- ▶ Hanad Hersi
- ▶ Iqbal Hossain
- ▶ Zeeshan Humayun
- ▶ Nusrat Islam
- ▶ Louie Josef
- ▶ Salim Kazi
- ▶ Angelos Kenos
- ▶ Virendra Khatana
- ▶ Raj Khillan
- ▶ Neha Kolape
- ▶ Rohit Kumar
- ▶ Sylvie Lebe
- ▶ Gary Lee

- ▶ Abdul Liban
- ▶ Bol Machar Maduot
- ▶ Yasir Mahmud
- ▶ Dona Malaish
- ▶ Deng Malith
- ▶ Afshan Mantoo
- ▶ Abdullahi Mohamud Ali
- ▶ Peter Mousaferiadis
- ▶ Shiva Nehrir
- ▶ Frank Newah-Jarfoi
- ▶ Anh (Ann) Nguyen
- ▶ Mai Nguyen
- ▶ Jazeer Nijamudeen
- ▶ Diana Noor
- ▶ Deng Lual Nuun
- ▶ Kirsten O'Connor-Smith
- ▶ Abimbola Odetayo
- ▶ Osman Osman
- ▶ Omar Pervaiz
- ▶ Nelson Pervaz
- ▶ David Prasad
- ▶ Fred Psaropoulos
- ▶ Marleine Raffoul
- ▶ Seide Raffoul
- ▶ Monica Sharma Raizada
- ▶ Gurdev Rattan
- ▶ Silvia Renda
- ▶ Sean Ryan
- ▶ Yadata Saba
- ▶ Najmo Said
- ▶ Karolina Salanoa
- ▶ Dawood Sammour
- ▶ Paul Seidl
- ▶ Charles Sesay
- ▶ Sanjay Sethi
- ▶ Tahira Sheikh
- ▶ Seyed Sherifdeen
- ▶ Muhammad Shuakat
- ▶ Amit Singh
- ▶ Gurninder Singh
- ▶ Dalal Sleiman
- ▶ Olga Stojic
- ▶ Vonivate Tawase
- ▶ Tenenet Taye
- ▶ Kapil Thakkar
- ▶ Thu-Trang Maria Tran
- ▶ Gurpreet Verma
- ▶ Deepak Vinayak OAM
- ▶ Andrew Wang
- ▶ Janetta Ziino
- ▶ Valeska Zuniga-Chondo

Multifaith Advisory Group Members 2020–2021

- ▶ All Nations Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Mulgrave
- ▶ AMAFHH Federation – Shi’a organisation
- ▶ National Council of Churches in Australia
- ▶ Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights
- ▶ Baha’i Community of Victoria
- ▶ Board of Imam’s Victoria
- ▶ Buddhist Council of Victoria
- ▶ Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – Second Archdiocesan District of Victoria and Tasmania
- ▶ Hindu Council of Australia (Vic)
- ▶ Hindu Society of Victoria
- ▶ Islamic Council of Victoria
- ▶ Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV)
- ▶ Lutheran Church of Australia, Victorian District
- ▶ Rabbinical Council of Victoria
- ▶ Catholic Social Services Victoria
- ▶ Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, Australian and New Zealand Diocese
- ▶ Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria
- ▶ The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne
- ▶ UNESCO
- ▶ Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- ▶ Victorian Council of Churches
- ▶ Ethnic Community Council of Victoria ECCV
- ▶ Australian Intercultural Society
- ▶ Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- ▶ Presbyterian Church of Victoria
- ▶ Jumbunna Episcopate
- ▶ Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Victorian Council of Churches
- ▶ Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- ▶ Catholic Church of Australia
- ▶ The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Cultural Infusion
- ▶ Council of Christians and Jews (Vic)
- ▶

Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Members 2020–2021

- ▶ American Chamber of Commerce in Australia (AmCham)
- ▶ Argentina Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Aus-Lanka Business Council
- ▶ Australia Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Africa Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Australia British Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia China Business Council – Victoria
- ▶ Australia India Business Council
- ▶ Australia Indonesia Business Council
- ▶ Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Japan Society of Victoria
- ▶ Australia Korea Business Council
- ▶ Australia Latin America Business Council
- ▶ Australia Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Australia Malaysia Business Council
- ▶ Australia Philippines Business Council
- ▶ Australia Sri Lanka Council Inc.
- ▶ Australia Thailand Business Council
- ▶ Australia Ukraine Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Zimbabwe Business Council
- ▶ Australian American Association (Victoria)
- ▶ Australian Lithuania Business Council
- ▶ Australian Macedonian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australian Maltese Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Peru Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australian Turkish Business Council
- ▶ Australian Turkish Businessmen and Industry
- ▶ Brazil Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Victoria
- ▶ French Australia Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ German Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- ▶ Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Multicultural Business Ministerial Council
- ▶ Netherlands Chamber of Commerce Australia
- ▶ Polish Chamber of Commerce Australia
- ▶ Victoria Croatian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

2020 Multicultural Award recipients

Award	Recipient
Premier's Award for Community Harmony	▶ Sheik Alaa El Zokm
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Youth Leadership	▶ Sarah Ghassali
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Media	▶ Stephanie Corsetti, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Business	▶ CareerSeekers New Australian Internship Program
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Emergency Services	▶ Veronica Canziani
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Local Government	▶ Greater Shepparton City Council
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Community Innovation	▶ Dr Michael Akindeju, Tim Lo Surdo, U3A Myrtleford and Districts
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Community Response and Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sukhvinder 'Sunny' Duggal ▶ Vincenzo De Paolis, Gracie Lolicato and Katrina Lolicato ▶ Islamic Council of Victoria ▶ Residents of the North Melbourne Flemington public housing high rises ▶ Carlton Local Agencies Network
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Refugee Advocacy	▶ Refugee Communities Association of Australia
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Sport	▶ Centre for Multicultural Youth and Football Victoria
Multicultural Award for Excellence in the Arts	▶ Aseel Tayah
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Health	▶ Bendigo Community Health Services
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Justice	▶ Dr Stephane Shepherd
Multicultural Award for Excellence in Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Early childhood: Ready, Set, Prep! Merri Health ▶ School education: Sacred Heart School Fitzroy ▶ VET-accredited training: Victoria University Polytechnic Youth Program ▶ VET pre-accredited community-based training: Banksia Gardens Community Services

2020 Victoria Police Award recipients

Award	Recipient
Police Annual Multicultural Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Sergeant Damien Lehmann▶ Leading Senior Constable Nektarios Parissis▶ Ansam Sadik▶ Leading Senior Constable Diana Quick▶ Acting Sergeant Greg Garrison▶ Senior Constable Sara Coe▶ Acting Senior Sergeant Rowan Epstein▶ Senior Sergeant Andrew Gardner▶ Leading Senior Constable Ash Dixit
Police Community Exemplary Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Chuol Puot▶ Saara Sabbagh▶ Pamela Kosij▶ Dilnaz Billimoria▶ Helen Jurcevic OAM▶ Preston Mosque▶ Whittlesea Community Connections▶ Victoria Police Cricket Club
Police Multicultural Media Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Senior Constable Kim Gammon▶ Senior Constable Travis Ellams
Police Annual Protective Service Officer Multicultural Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ PSO Ratul Biswas

2021 Refugee Award recipients

Award	Recipient
Leadership Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Elvis Martin, Southbank VIC▶ Philip Moo Eh, Wyndham Vale VIC
Young Leader Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Taj Aldeeb, South Kingsville VIC▶ Paw Ku Htee, Jackass Flat VIC▶ Yusuf Liban, Heidelberg West VIC
Business Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Ali Nazari, Narre Warren South VIC▶ Nayran Tabiej, Melbourne VIC
Achievement Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Teba Mazin, Happy Brain Education▶ Eva Hussain, Polaron▶ Trung Dzung Le, Hollywood Nails



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Annual report 2020–2021

The 2020–2021 Annual Report covers the core work of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and its achievements within the context of its objectives and functions, as outlined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.

The information provided in this report was accurate as of 30 June 2021.

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