

# Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2024



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Welcome

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Speech by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable **Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria**

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Speech by the Honourable **Jacinta Allan MP, Premier of Victoria**

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Networking and canapes

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# Message from the Governor



As Governor of Victoria, it is a pleasure to warmly welcome all to the 2024 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

Multiculturalism is not just a part of Victoria – it is at the heart of what makes this State so special.

Communities from all over the world have come to proudly call our State home, enriching us all in the process.

These Awards are an acknowledgement of those that have gone above and beyond for both their community and Victoria as a whole, with contributions across a diverse range of categories – such as arts, business, sport and mental health and wellbeing.

Each and every day, your actions help shape Victoria for the better. As we work with one another to build a shared future, it is crucial that we take time to reflect on and recognise those that are bringing our communities closer together.

On behalf of all Victorians, thank you for your selfless dedication and contribution to our State.

**Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC**  
Governor of Victoria

# Message from the Premier



Victoria is a proudly multicultural state.

Together, we speak more than 290 languages and practice more than 135 faiths.

And every day, our diversity makes us stronger, kinder, more connected.

That hasn't happened by accident.

Instead, it's been the collective effort of communities, over generations.

Everyone who's moved here. Everyone who's found work here. Everyone who started a business or started a family.

Everyone who came to Victoria to improve their own lives, and in the process, improved everyone else's.

It's your history, culture, and sacrifice that has shaped this state – and made it our modern multicultural Victoria.

With these awards, we celebrate that incredible contribution.

To all the Honour Roll inductees, award winners, nominees, organisations and individuals – a big congratulations, and an even bigger thanks.

Thank you for helping to create the diverse and inclusive Victoria we are so lucky enough to call our home.

**The Hon Jacinta Allan MP**

Premier of Victoria, Member for Bendigo East

# Message from the Minister



Congratulations to the 2024 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence winners, highly commended recipients, finalists, and nominees.

Now in its 23rd year, the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence celebrates and honours individuals and organisations for their remarkable contributions to multicultural Victoria.

From arts and business to emergency services and youth leadership, this year's awards shine a spotlight on the incredible ways these efforts foster cross-cultural understanding, strengthen community bonds, and create a more inclusive Victoria.

I would like to acknowledge VMC Chair Viv Nguyen AM, the Commissioners, and staff for their leadership and deep connections with the community.

I look forward to continuing our work together to advance and celebrate multiculturalism and diversity across Victoria.

**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

# Message from the Chairperson



Welcome to the 2024 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

These prestigious annual awards, now in their 23rd year, recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions to the strength and dynamism of Victoria. They honour individuals and organisations who, by their example, exemplify the very best of our diverse state.

Through their collective efforts, our multicultural champions create positive and lasting change, building bridges between communities, fostering understanding and improving the lives of others.

We see this impact across so many domains – from community service to business, education, arts and culture, mental health and emergency services.

Diversity as a source of innovation, inspiration, unity and strength.

Congratulations to our 2024 award winners, highly commended recipients, nominees and nominators.

Thank you for your efforts, generosity, courage and commitment – a true testament of diversity at its best.

**Vivienne Nguyen AM**

Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission



# Arts Award

Recognising artists, performers and organisations who develop and implement arts programs or initiatives which improve intercultural learning or social cohesion, through participation and performance.

## Winner



**Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, City of Greater Dandenong**

Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre (WSG) is Dandenong's hub for contemporary art. WSG's latest project, HOME24, is a transformative exhibition that celebrates refugee and asylum seeker artists. By encouraging intercultural dialogue, WSG promotes social cohesion through art, culinary experiences and collaborative events that connect the multicultural community in Dandenong.

## Winner



**Albanian Moslem Society Shepparton**

The Albanian Moslem Society Shepparton celebrates and preserves Albanian culture through annual events, language classes and community support. By fostering social cohesion and establishing the first mosque in Victoria, the society enriches Shepparton's multicultural fabric and empowers future generations.



# Arts Award

## Highly Commended



### L2R Dance

L2R Dance is one of a handful of youth arts organisations in Australia that provides authentic opportunities and employment pathways for children and young people traditionally underrepresented or absent from mainstream arts and culture.



# Business and Employment Award

Recognising businesses and employment pathways that provide outstanding service to Victorian multicultural communities and lead the way in building a culturally diverse and culturally safe workplace. For newly arrived Victorians, workforce participation and easy access to culturally appropriate services are crucial to developing a sense of belonging and purpose.

## Winner



**Mohammed Alebrahimi**

Mohammed supports and promotes culturally appropriate care: its ability to improve the health outcomes of elderly migrants and refugees; its success in providing training and employment opportunities to younger migrants; and its capacity to create better social connections for the entire community.

## Winner



## Multicultural Consulting Services

Multicultural Consulting Services (MCS) is a certified social enterprise dedicated to empowering diverse communities in Victoria. Through tailored employment services, training, and ongoing support, MCS fosters inclusion and economic participation for migrants, refugees and other priority jobseekers – helping them overcome barriers and achieve long-term success in the workforce.



# Business and Employment Award

## Highly Commended



**MiCare Ltd**

MiCare's mission and vision is founded on the provision of services that meet the diverse needs of people living in multicultural Australia. Services include aged residential and home care, retirement living and migrant and settlement services, supporting migrants and refugees as they transition to a new life in Australia.

## Highly Commended



**Niti Bhargava**

With over 15 years of finance experience and a strong focus on financial literacy and awareness, Niti has helped many migrant families take control of their finances. Last year, she was recognised in the Victorian Parliament by local MP Luba Grigorovitch for her contributions to financial literacy.



# Emergency Services Award

Recognising people, units, clubs or stations working or volunteering for Victoria's emergency services, who promote and champion cultural diversity and address the specific needs of multicultural communities.

## Winner



### **Fire Rescue Victoria - Multicultural Liaison Officers**

Fire Rescue Victoria Multicultural Liaison Officers help multicultural communities reduce fire and emergency risks. By bridging the cultural divide, fostering trusted relationships, addressing knowledge gaps and connecting with communities, they empower multicultural Victorians to collaborate for a stronger, more prepared future with reduced risk of the impacts of fire events.



# Local Government Award

Recognising local government authorities (councils) for major initiatives that meet the needs of their culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities.

## Winner



### City of Melbourne – International Education Team

The City of Melbourne has made significant contributions to multiculturalism by supporting international students from over 160 countries. Through diverse programs like My Melbourne and The Couch, the City has engaged over 50,000 students, offering social activities, food relief, employability workshops and volunteering opportunities. These initiatives have reinforced Melbourne's position as Australia's best student city for 10 consecutive years.

## Highly Commended



### City of Greater Dandenong Council Festivals and Events

The City of Greater Dandenong Council Springvale Snow Fest event is the biggest winter street food festival in Victoria. The event highlights multicultural communities and provides entertainment, activities and delicious food from around the world – even delivering snow to the centre of Springvale!



Recognising outstanding reporting of issues of importance to culturally diverse communities and reporting that contributes to improved cross-cultural understanding.

### Winner



#### Lakshmi Ganapathy

Early-career journalist and theatre-maker Lakshmi Ganapathy voices thought-provoking, overlooked perspectives through her work. Currently the Melbourne Content Creator for Indian Link, an award-winning publication empowering the South Asian diaspora, she was part of ArtsHub's inaugural Amplify Collective, and has made content for RMITV, La Trobe University and Channel 31.

### Winner



#### Voice of West Papua Radio

Voice of West Papua has been on air for 11 years and is presented by West Papuan community members who voice the aspirations of West Papua's culture, share songs, interviews, music and stories.



# Media Award

## Highly Commended



### **Steve (Sotiris) Hatzimanolis**

For five decades, Sotiris Hatzimanolis has been a tireless advocate for independent Greek Australian media. His journey began in the 1970s with Greek Australian radio and continued with Neos Kosmos, where he played a pivotal role in transforming the publication from a Greek-language newspaper into a bilingual Greek and English platform.



# Mental Health and Wellbeing Award

Recognising mental health practitioners, researchers, volunteers and organisations who address the needs of people from culturally diverse backgrounds and/or provide outstanding mental health and wellbeing care, support or services to multicultural communities.

## Winner



**Dr Senem Eren**

Dr Eren is a trusted psychologist with 20 years of expertise in trauma, positive psychology, and the impact of cultural influences on mental health. Dr Eren – one of the first Australian Muslims to hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Psychology – co-founded the Centre for Muslim Wellbeing and Green Crescent Australia.

## Winner



**Associate Professor Iraklis Harry Minas**

Associate Professor Iraklis Harry Minas is the the Head of the Global and Cultural Mental Health Unit, School of Population and Global Health at The University of Melbourne. His areas of expertise include psychiatry, global mental health, mental health system development, disaster mental health and multicultural mental health – mental health of immigrants and refugees.



# Mental Health and Wellbeing Award

## Highly Commended



### Mental Health and Well-being Foundation

The Mental Health and Well-being Foundation, led by Dr Francis Acquah, aims to transform mental health care through global advocacy, culturally-tailored training, and impactful research. The Foundation's commitment to education and community engagement fosters a more inclusive approach, enhancing mental health support for diverse populations globally.



# Police Awards

## Winners – Police Annual Multicultural Award

### Detective Senior Constable Andrew Turton



Detective Senior Constable Andrew Turton was instrumental in the investigation and successful prosecution of a case involving a faith leader and multiple victims. Andrew is to be commended for pursuing this case with great determination and professionalism – and for his tenacity and empathy on behalf of the victims and their families.

### Senior Constable Andrew Moreton



The nomination of Senior Constable Andrew Moreton is to be applauded because it highlights the need for Victoria Police to reach out to all young people, including those at risk. Andrew has used his soccer playing and refereeing skills to reach out to youth in the City of Darebin and beyond. Particularly impressive is the successful encouragement of young males and females to undertake Football Victoria's referee program. Also impressive is Andrew's work with Somali and Arab youth. Senior Constable Moreton has truly won the respect of the community, service providers and his police colleagues. Andrew has also helped schools deliver cyber safety training programs, an initiative that helps protect young people.



# Police Awards

## Senior Sergeant Stylianos (Steve) Spyrou



Senior Sergeant Steve Spyrou has been a member of Victoria Police for almost four decades. Steve has played a central role in the formation and work of the Victorian Hellenic Police Association, through events such as the St. Artemious Day celebrations and the annual Greek National Day march. Steve has encouraged and mentored younger Greek Australians to join Victoria Police – and delivered personal and home safety initiatives for elderly Greek groups.

## Senior Sergeant Alasdair Farrell



Senior Sergeant Alasdair Farrell has played a central role in liaising with community leaders, including dealing with a community crisis triggered by overseas events that impacted heavily on Jewish and Palestinian Muslim and Christian communities in Melbourne. Alasdair liaised with community leaders and helped solve digital and technological challenges, giving Victoria Police access to areas of significance, minimising risks and generating a sense of community safety and support. He devised a system for event notification and risk assessment, including for religious festivals. He has risk-assessed over 150 events and attended 500-plus engagements to support event planning.



# Police Awards

## Sports COPPS - Detective Sergeant Vincent Manno



Detective Sergeant Vincent Manno instituted Sports COPPS in 2001. This outstanding police/youth project has engaged over 14,850 young people across Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria, reducing youth crime, building trust between police officers and multicultural communities, reducing historical tensions and establishing partnerships with community groups, schools and sports clubs. This positive program delivers on its mantra: Life Skills through Sports.

## Winner - Police Community Exemplary Award

### Weda Mohseni



Weda Mohseni is a key member of KOMAK, a Uniting initiative in Dandenong that supports the Afghan and other Muslim communities. KOMAK is the Dari word for 'help' and 'support'. In addition to her case work in the community, Weda has been instrumental in advising police in the south-eastern corridor on youth crime, family violence, forced marriage and public safety. Weda has arranged and helped deliver community information sessions, especially to newly arrived immigrants and refugees, and has been particularly supportive of Victoria Police officers.



**Winner - Police  
Multicultural Media Award**

**A/Sgt Kevin Dong**



This nomination highlights the increasing presence within Victoria Police of Chinese officers – and highlights the officers who have facilitated this welcome development. In his five years at the Oakleigh Police Station, A/Sergeant Kevin Dong has established close links with Chinese-speaking communities, especially through his appearances on Chinese media. He has conducted information sessions in Mandarin for Chinese residents, and supported activities during Chinese Lunar New Year.

Kevin has addressed student groups at two universities and provided a mentoring role for new Chinese Australian recruits into Victorian Police. He represents a vibrant bridge between law enforcement officers and various Chinese communities.



# Police Awards

## 2023 Police Community Exemplary Award

Major Events Human Rights Guide Team



### VICTORIA POLICE

The preparation of the Major Events Human Rights Guide provided Victoria Police with a chance to examine its own approach to human rights – especially in the context of their adoption and implementation at major events (including major sporting events). The preparation team – Alena Hetsch, Anthony Abate, Keely Kontaxis and Darren Kenos, working with John Croker as the Principal Solicitor for Human Rights – are to be commended for this Human Rights initiative.

## 2023 Police Annual Multicultural Award

Senior Constable Rana Khan



Originally from Pakistan, Senior Constable Rana Khan became a PSO in 2013, before becoming a police officer in 2017. Fluent in five languages, he has the capabilities to reach out to Gippsland multicultural communities. He has demonstrated community leadership by creating an Islamic prayer centre in Drouin – and educated local Islamic community members about Victoria Police and the law, not least in the family violence area. Also commendable, he set up a prayer room in the Warragul police station.

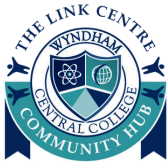
*Two winners from the 2023 Police category are also included in this year's award ceremony.*



# Premier's Award for Community Harmony

Recognising an individual or organisation that has made a significant contribution to increasing understanding, acceptance and cooperation between different faith and cultural groups. The winner of this award will be selected by the Premier of Victoria.

## Winner



### Wyndham Central College Link Centre Community Hub

The Wyndham Central College Community Hub fosters engagement with diverse local and national organisations. Located in a disadvantaged area, it serves over 1300 students, with 48 per cent from migrant or refugee backgrounds. The Hub offers various programs for adults (e.g. English language, digital literacy) and youth (e.g. cultural groups, support services). It aims to build family capacity, improve student outcomes and deepen community partnerships.

The Hub has become integral to the school, providing culturally safe support and promoting cross-cultural connections. It serves as a Tier 2 support system, offering targeted assistance to students and families while strengthening school-wide family and community engagement capabilities.



# Prevention of Family Violence Award

Recognising family violence practitioners, researchers, volunteers and organisations that address the needs of people with culturally diverse backgrounds and/or provide outstanding family violence services to multicultural communities.

## Winner



### Whittlesea Community Connections

Whittlesea Community Connections has been working with local multicultural communities for over 50 years, providing a range of services and opportunities. Since 2021 the Phase 2: Whittlesea CALD FV project has improved life outcomes for women at risk or experiencing family violence.

## Highly Commended



### AMES Australia - Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership Program

AMES Australia's Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership Program is aimed at empowering community leaders and equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to tackle the scourge of domestic violence in culturally appropriate ways.



# Prevention of Family Violence Award

## Highly Commended



**Ajsela Siskovic**

Under the leadership of Ajsela Siskovic, the inTouch Women's Legal Centre provides vital support to migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence. Ajsela leads a dedicated team that offers culturally-responsive legal and migration services, empowering women to attain safety, stability and independence.



# Refugee Awards

Recognising people and organisations that: support or advocate for the rights and needs of newly-arrived refugees and people seeking asylum; improve access to settlement services and/or employment pathways; create opportunities for participation, contribution and belonging. Refugee Award categories include:

**Achievement Award** – recognition for the outstanding achievements of those who personally or professionally excelled through study, work, entrepreneurship or volunteering

**Leadership Award** – recognition for those who demonstrated outstanding leadership within the community through study, work or volunteering

**Young Leader Award** – recognition for those aged 25 years and under, who demonstrated outstanding leadership within the community through study, work or volunteering

**Business Award** – recognition for businesses who support the employment, contribution and/or participation of those who arrived as refugees or asylum seekers



# Refugee Awards

## Refugee Achievement Award

### Winner



**Mohammad Haroon Sayed**

Mohammad Haroon Sayed is a dedicated community leader and advocate for refugees and asylum seekers, driving projects that improve access to essential services, empower women and promote multicultural harmony. His efforts have created lasting change in Victoria, supporting vulnerable communities and inspiring future generations to build an inclusive society.

### Highly Commended



**Jacqueline Aungminn**

Jacqueline is a passionate advocate for refugees, dedicated to empowering multicultural communities through education, support and community-building initiatives. Her volunteer efforts, work within MiCare and the community sector has transformed lives, fostered inclusion, resilience, and opportunities for marginalised groups to thrive and actively contribute to Australian society.



# Refugee Awards

## Refugee Business Award

### Winner



### Reliable Community Care (RCC)

RCC, founded by recently-arrived former Bhutanese refugees, empowers newly arrived refugees through employment pathways, culturally sensitive services and by fostering social inclusion. RCC's refugee-led approach creates lasting change, building a more unified and diverse society in which refugees are empowered.

### Highly Commended



### Bendigo Community Health Services (Emergency Preparedness program for former refugees)

Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS) is a not-for-profit community organisation funded through various government health programs, community donations and sponsorships. With a strong connection to community, and over 45 years of local health experience, BCBS understands local health issues and responds to consumers through a range of services and partnerships.



# Refugee Awards

## Refugee Leadership Award

### Winner



#### Rasha Khalid Abbas

Rasha Abbas, founder of Palestine Australia Relief and Action (PARA) and CEO of inTouch, champions the rights and wellbeing of Palestinians and vulnerable migrant communities. Her leadership drives impactful support services, enhances cultural integration and fosters opportunities, making a profound and positive difference to multicultural Australia.

### Highly Commended



#### Hazara Shamama Association of Victoria Inc.

The Hazara Shamama Association of Victoria Inc. (HSA) is a leading advocate for refugees and asylum seekers, offering vital support through English classes, citizenship preparation, employment workshops and leadership development. HSA empowers individuals to integrate, succeed and contribute to Victoria's vibrant multicultural community.



# Refugee Awards

## Refugee Young Leader Award

### Winner



**Nargis (Diba) Jalal**

Diba Jalal, a passionate woman in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths), has made a significant impact through her roles with VASA and RMIT's ASA. She has revitalised Afghan cultural events and inspired young engineers, including refugees. Her work in empowering youth and building connections has greatly enriched diverse communities.

## Refugee Leadership Award

### Highly Commended



**Hsar Thein Ju**

Well known, hard-working and kind-hearted, Hsar has worked for Parks Victoria for 10 years and, through his work, made positive contributions to diverse communities.



Recognising people and organisations who develop and implement sporting programs that aim to build social cohesion and harmony across communities.

### Winner



#### Frankleen Muken Jeremiah Newah-Jarfoi

Frankleen is a passionate advocate for social justice and community cohesion. A personable, considerate and respectful young leader, he uses athletics as a platform to promote young multicultural people – and to advocate for equitable funding to ensure those young people might participate in the sport of their choice.

### Winner



#### Her Run

Her Run empowers women from diverse backgrounds through inclusive sports and wellness programs that celebrate cultural heritage and promote physical and mental wellbeing. With over 2,400 members, HerRun fosters social cohesion, leadership and community engagement, making a lasting impact on Victoria's multicultural landscape.



## Highly Commended



### **Teuila Hanalei Reid**

Teuila is Executive Director at Helping Hoops and Director at Koorie Academy. She volunteers with numerous sports-based groups throughout Naarm. With a former career in the US Foreign Service, Teuila's global community development experience has equipped her with a diverse skill set which significantly adds to the running of Helping Hoops.



# Youth Leadership Award

Recognising the outstanding contributions of a young person, group or organisation which provides leadership, empowerment and support to young Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds.

## Winner



**Ali Agha Wali Zada**

Ali is a dedicated youth leader from Geelong, committed to promoting multiculturalism and mental health awareness. Through his work with local and international communities, Ali has made a significant impact, fostering cultural understanding and supporting education. His leadership and advocacy inspire others to build a more inclusive society.

## Highly Commended



**Avenue Productions Volunteers Team**

The Avenue Productions Volunteers Team is a dynamic youth group empowering culturally diverse young people through the planning and delivery of creative events. By promoting inclusion, fostering intercultural dialogue, and amplifying the voices of youth, volunteers are building a more inclusive, vibrant and culturally aware community in Moonee Valley and beyond.



# Multicultural Honour Roll

Recognising the efforts of individuals who have made exceptional and lasting contributions to multiculturalism in Victoria.

Dr Francis Roger **Acquah AM**

Associate Professor Josefina **Antoniades**

Dilnaz Homi **Billimoria**

Fabiola **Campbell**

Maryum Aziz **Chaudhry**

Wesa Wai-Sum **Chau**

Lyda **Dankha**

Derya Deniz **Demiroglu**

Sivanthi **Gurumurothy**

Joseph **Haweil**

Aayushi **Khillan**

Gary Yew Foo **Lee**

Dr Morley Akinbode **Muse**

Tony Le **Nguyen**

Professor Manjula Datta **O'Connor**

Professor Nicholas John **Papastergiadis**

Miriam **Silva AM**

Manpreet Kaur **Singh**

Dalal **Sleiman**

Shazia **Syed**

Costa Alex **Vasili**

Cecilia Lynn Nolasco **Vence**

Deeptha **Wickramaratna**

Jijun (Jack) **Yang**

Annisa Li **Zhang**

# Thank you

The Victorian Multicultural Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the organisations featured on the following pages for their sponsorship of this year's awards - and for their support of multicultural excellence across Victoria.





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