

Yarra Multicultural Partnerships Policy



Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

National Relay Service

TTY 133 677 then (03) 9205 5055

Languages

العربية 9280 1930

中文 9280 1937

Ελληνικά 9280 1934

Italiano 9280 1931

Español 9280 1935

Tiếng Việt 9280 1939

Other 9280 1940

Contents

A note on language	1
Overview	1
Purpose of this policy	1
Scope	1
An intersectional lens	1
Review of the policy.....	1
Policy Context	5
0BInternational.....	5
1BFederal	5
2BState	5
What Yarra does	5
Our key partners.....	5
Yarra Networks.....	5
Advocacy	6
Yarra programs and services.....	7
Our Guiding Principles	8
Our Commitments	9
Priority 1: Standing Against Racism	9
Priority 2: Effective Communication and Respectful Engagement	9
Priority 3: Cultivating Connections	10
Priority 4: Building Inclusive and Accessible Spaces	10
Priority 5: Fostering Community Capacity	10
Monitoring, Reporting and Updating	11

A note on language

This document adopts the term *multicultural community* to refer to Yarra's population who speak English as a second language, are from non-English speaking countries and/or are from culturally diverse backgrounds. It also includes people born in Australia to parents of overseas descent or individuals from multi-faith backgrounds.

Overview

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of the Multicultural Partnerships policy is to guide the Council's support for the multicultural community within the City of Yarra. Through an extensive community engagement process, the priorities of this policy have been shaped by our key stakeholders, primarily our multicultural community.

The policy sets expectations for our approach, ensures transparency, and strives for best-practice and equitable outcomes in our work with and for the community. It aligns with and aims to complement existing strategies, policies, and plans, promoting a cohesive approach across various initiatives towards achieving common objectives for our community.

Scope

- This policy applies to Yarra City Council's work with our multicultural community.
- This policy applies to the whole of the Yarra City Council organisation.

An intersectional lens

The policy was developed with a strengths-based approach, highlighting our multicultural community's self-determination and valuable contributions to Yarra. It also acknowledges the complex challenges that arise from the intersection of cultural and racial marginalisation. Consequently, Council recognises that factors such as gender, sexuality, age, and disability can compound the marginalisation and discrimination experienced by members of our multicultural community.

Review of the policy

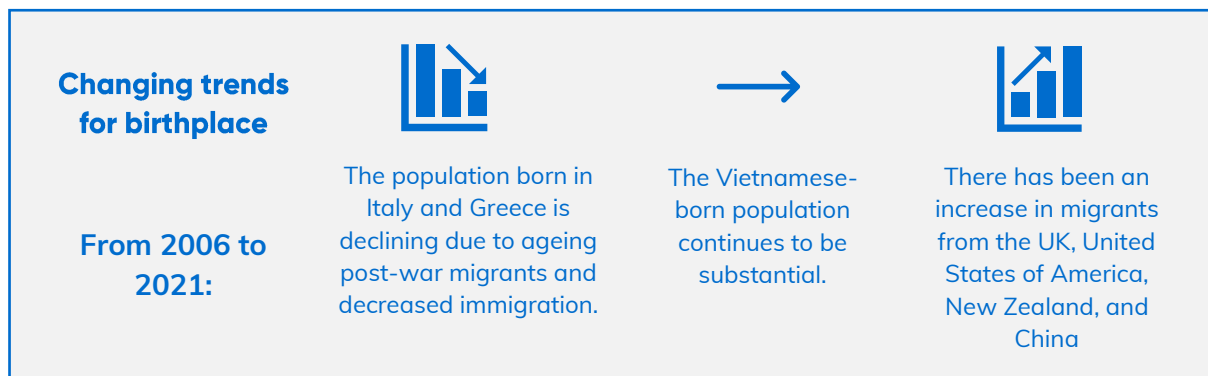
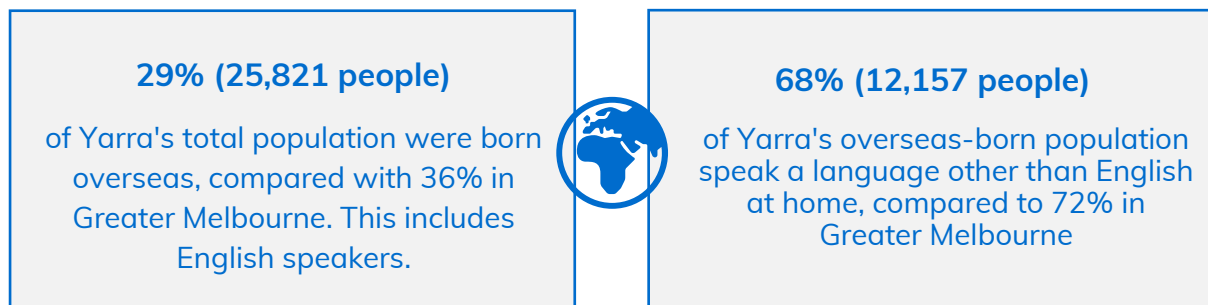
A review of the policy will occur at the point of major change to Council's policy context or the broader policy environment.

Our Community

Yarra respects and celebrates our multicultural community. Understanding data such as what languages people speak, changing trends in birthplace, and where people live helps us to respond and provide services that make a difference.

Demographics and analysis.^{1,2}

Overseas born population and languages spoken at home



¹ Demographic information is based on the 2021 ABS Census data and data from the Department of Home Affairs (requested in 2023)

Overseas born by suburb



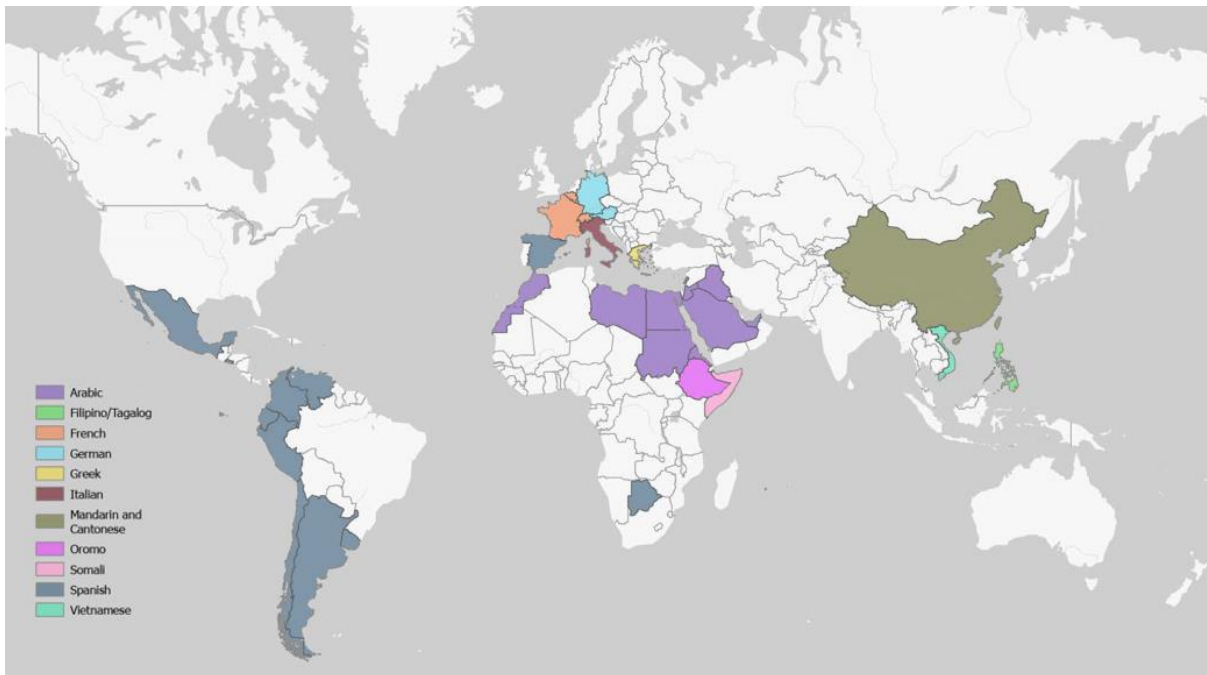
North Richmond is the most culturally diverse suburb, with 37% of its residents born overseas.

It's followed closely by Collingwood (35%) and Abbotsford (34%).

Clifton Hill is the least diverse, with 21% of its population born overseas.

Languages other than English spoken at home

Rank	Language	Number of people speaking language
1	Vietnamese	2,998
2	Greek	1,982
3	Mandarin	1,710
4	Italian	1,243
5	Cantonese	1,071
6	Spanish	865
7	French	607
8	Arabic	584
9	German	462
10	Somali	402
11	Oromo	330
12	Filipino/Tagalog	279



Top 12 Non-English Languages Spoken at Home and Country of Origin Approximated by Recorded Country of Birth

Migration streams



- Between Jan 2019 - Jul 2023 (averaged), 55% of migrants have arrived through the skilled stream, followed by those arriving through the family stream (43%).
- 23% of Yarra residents born overseas were recently arrived in Australia (2016-2021), a slightly higher proportion than that of Greater Melbourne (20%).

Top languages by social housing (including English speakers)



1. Vietnamese (22%)
2. Mandarin (6%)
3. Somali, Cantonese, Arabic (5%)
4. Oromo, Hakka (4%)
5. Turkish, Amharic, Tigryinya (2%)

The top 5 religions were:

Religion



60%

of Yarra's residents do not identify with a religion.

- Western (Roman) Catholic (14.2%)
- Anglican (3.9%)
- Buddhism (3.4%)
- Greek Orthodox (3%)
- Islam (2.4%)

Between 2016 and 2021, Christianity experienced a significant decline, whereas Islam had the highest rate of growth.

Need for assistance (non-English speakers)



10% of Yarra's non-English speaking residents indicated a need for assistance, compared to 4% of Yarra's total population

Residents aged 65 years and over accounted for 72.6% of this group, and increased between 2016 and 2021

Unpaid care and unpaid childcare (non-English speakers)



13% of Yarra's non-English speaking residents provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age, compared to 10.5% of Yarra's total population. Residents aged 65 years accounted for 72.6% of this group.

19% of Yarra's non-English speaking residents provides unpaid childcare, compared to 16.5% of Yarra's total population

Policy Context

Yarra has a longstanding commitment to welcoming and supporting culturally diverse communities. Numerous waves of migrant communities have settled in Yarra and contributed to the diverse characters of our municipality. Council continues to recognise the important contributions that newly arrived communities make to our local community. Through inclusive spaces, tailored programs, and responsive services, we empower diverse groups to participate fully in our community and celebrate their invaluable contributions.

International	Federal	State
UN Convention & Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)	The Racial Discrimination Act (1975)	Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (2001)
UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1996)	Australian Human Rights Commission Act (1986)	Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)
UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)	Multicultural Access and Equity Policy Guide (2018)	Equal Opportunity Act (2010)
UNESCO's International Coalition of Cities Against Discrimination in Asia and Pacific Ten Point Commitment Plan (2009)	Multicultural Framework Review (2024)	Multicultural Victoria Act (2011)
		The Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement (2017)

What Yarra does

Yarra City Council delivers a range of services and programs that engage our multicultural community on multiple levels. Our invaluable partnerships provide us with the ability to extend our reach, which ranges from individual and group support to advocacy.

Our key partners

We work closely with our partners to support our multicultural community. Our partners include neighbourhood houses, local schools, employment programs, health services, outreach and support services and tertiary institutions.

Yarra Networks

The Yarra Multicultural Advisory Group (YMAG) promotes dialogue between Council and its multicultural communities, ensuring a broad representation through its open membership for Yarra's diverse community members, organisations, and service providers. With representation from two elected Councillors and supported by Council staff, YMAG's core duties involve advising on multicultural policies, advocating for multicultural communities, championing cultural diversity, and facilitating resource sharing among community groups.

Additionally, the Council helps facilitate the Yarra Multicultural Services Network (YMSN). In this forum, agencies that provide services for refugees, people seeking asylum, and

newly arrived migrants in Yarra can collaborate, share resources, and exchange best practices to enhance the support and services they offer to the community. This collective effort aims to ensure a coordinated approach to address these groups' unique needs and challenges, promoting a more inclusive and supportive environment within the Yarra region.

Advocacy

We support and are active members of a range of initiatives that support our multicultural community. These initiatives include Welcoming Cities, the Mayoral Taskforce for People Seeking Asylum, the Refugee Welcome Zone, We Stand Together, the community racism reporting tool, "Racism. It Stops with Me", and Refugee Week. Our support is dynamic, and we will continue to support new initiatives as they emerge.

Welcoming Cities is an initiative aimed at fostering inclusive and welcoming communities for all, with a special focus on immigrants and refugees. It supports local governments in their efforts to create policies and practices that help newcomers integrate and participate fully in the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of their communities.

The **Mayoral Taskforce for People Seeking Asylum** is a collective effort led by city mayors to address the needs and challenges faced by people seeking asylum. It aims to provide coordinated support and advocacy to improve the living conditions, access to services, and rights of individuals seeking asylum within their jurisdictions.

A **Refugee Welcome Zone** is a commitment made by a local government to welcoming refugees into their community. It involves a pledge to uphold the rights of refugees, promote their inclusion and participation, and enhance cultural and social understanding within the community.

We Stand Together is an initiative aimed at promoting unity and combating discrimination and racism in communities. It encourages individuals and organisations to stand in solidarity against hate and prejudice, fostering a more inclusive and respectful society.

The **Community Racism Reporting Tool** is an online platform or service that allows individuals to report instances of racism they experience or witness in their community. It is designed to collect data on racist incidents, provide support to victims, and inform policy and community responses to racism.

"Racism. It Stops with Me" is a campaign that invites all Australians to reflect on what they can do to counter racism wherever it happens. It seeks to promote a clear message that racism is unacceptable, and it is the responsibility of individuals and organisations to take a stand against it.

Refugee Week is an annual event celebrated in many countries to acknowledge and celebrate the positive contributions of refugees to society. It aims to educate the public about refugee experiences, highlight their achievements, and advocate for their rights and protection.

Yarra programs and services

We deliver culturally-specific services and programs provided through:



We build community capacity through:



We facilitate and strengthen connections and knowledge through:



We remove barriers through:



Our Guiding Principles

The following statements are an affirmation of Council's ongoing commitment to the multicultural community it serves. The statements outline our values and underpin all facets of our work, from advocacy to policy development to service provision.

Multicultural Yarra

Yarra City Council:

- Affirms that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first custodians of this country and continue their traditional custodianship of this land. The Council recognises the pre-colonial cultural diversity with over 250 First Peoples nations and commits to actively promoting, contributing to, and celebrating this heritage.
- Recognises cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity as integral to Yarra's history and identity, acknowledging that this diversity enriches the community.
- Respects and promotes the expression of culture, language, and religion, advocating for these expressions to be free from vilification or discrimination, as these are basic human rights for all people.
- Acknowledges the intersections within multicultural communities that may increase the risk of further disadvantage for specific groups, including women, refugees, people seeking asylum, People of Colour, older individuals, members of the LGBTIQA+ community, and people with disabilities.
- Promotes an inclusive community where all individuals are enabled to fully participate in the municipality's social, cultural, economic, and political opportunities, regardless of race, gender, culture, language, or religion.
- Welcomes refugees, people seeking asylum, and other newly arrived migrants to the municipality with respect and compassion, which is pivotal in fostering a welcoming and socially cohesive community.
- Rejects all forms of racial and religious vilification, violence, harassment, and unlawful discrimination, working towards a community free from racism.

Welcoming Refugees & People Seeking Asylum

Yarra City Council:

- Recognises and welcomes all individuals who have arrived on humanitarian visas, those seeking asylum, and refugees who arrive on other visa types, including family migration and skilled migration.
- Adheres to the United Nations definition of a person seeking asylum as someone seeking international protection whose claim has not yet been fully decided.
- Acknowledges the challenging journeys of people seeking asylum, often fleeing war and human rights violations and emphasises treating them with dignity and compassion, recognising their strengths and resilience.
- Commits to providing opportunities for refugees and people seeking asylum to actively participate and contribute to community life.
- Advocates for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum to be free from hardship and to actively participate in the community, while also challenging discriminatory beliefs and policies.
- Celebrates and acknowledges the contributions of refugees and people seeking asylum to Yarra, recognising these communities' inherent strengths and resilience.

Our Commitments

Our commitments are themed into five priority areas that have been formed through extensive community engagement with a range of stakeholders. Our policy objectives demonstrate how we will act as a Council to ensure the City of Yarra is an inclusive place for our multicultural community to live, work, and enjoy.

Priority 1: Standing Against Racism

We are committed to:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1.1 | A zero-tolerance approach against racism and discrimination to the wider community |
| 1.2 | Fostering partnerships to eliminate racism and discrimination (e.g. anti-racism research and projects) |
| 1.3 | Enabling community and staff to report racial abuse and vilification and for our staff to promptly address issues that occur in Council spaces in a manner that the person reporting feels heard and understood |
| 1.4 | Raising awareness in the community on issues of racism and discrimination and providing up-to-date information on where to find support |
| 1.5 | Strengthening workplace practices and processes that ensure cultural safety for our multicultural community and staff |
| 1.6 | Role-modelling inclusive recruitment practices to increase diversity in the workplace, including in leadership roles |
| 1.7 | Actively welcoming refugee and asylum seeker families to Yarra by ensuring inclusive and relevant programs and services that help them feel valued and supported as integral members of our community. |

Priority 2: Effective Communication and Respectful Engagement

We are committed to:

- | | |
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| 2.1 | Ensuring our communications and information dissemination are accessible to our multicultural community (e.g. picture-based, plain language, translation) |
| 2.2 | Adopting a flexible and tailored approach to communications and engagement that caters to the diverse needs of our multicultural community (e.g. paper-based, digital-based, Bi-Cultural Liaison Officer, online social messaging platform) |
| 2.3 | Actively informing our multicultural community of relevant social, environmental, economic, and political issues where relevant to Council's remit |
| 2.4 | Streamlining council processes and systems to increase accessibility and participation (e.g. website, language services, planning) |
| 2.5 | Improving the community's trust and understanding towards local government through accountable and respectful engagement and relationship-building |
| 2.6 | Utilising the model of Bicultural Liaison (i.e. staff who use cultural knowledge, language skills, lived experience and community connections to elevate community voices), to engage with the community. We respect the skills, time, and diverse commitments of Bi-Cultural staff and are committed to ethical remuneration and professional development opportunities |
| 2.7 | Engagement practices that are ethical, genuine and meaningful and represent the diversity within the community, avoiding over-reliance on the same cohorts and closing the loop on consultations |

NB. This Priority is aligned to our [Community Engagement Policy](#)

Priority 3: Cultivating Connections

We are committed to:	
3.1	Working with our partners and stakeholders to deliver a wide range of services to the community, and seeking new opportunities where possible, responding to emerging issues as they arise
3.2	Fostering connections and building relationships between groups that share cultural identities and/or language
3.3	Facilitating opportunities for inter-cultural learning and celebration through programs and events
3.4	Building relationships with our community and partners through participation and support of community events,
3.5	Commemorating and celebrating significant dates for our multicultural community by honouring longstanding traditions while remaining responsive to our community's changing demographics and cultural identities.

Priority 4: Building Inclusive and Accessible Spaces

We are committed to:	
4.1	Working with our multicultural community on how Council parks, public spaces and facilities can be more accessible, representative, safe and liveable
4.2	Educating, advocating and supporting local businesses, service providers and sporting clubs to ensure programs and activities provided in Yarra are done so in an equitable and inclusive manner
4.3	Continuing the use of an inclusion and diversity lens when allocating sports grounds and facilities
4.4	Continuing to promote accessible Council services and programs that cater to the specific needs of our multicultural communities, developing further when they no longer meet the needs of the community
4.5	Building inclusive and accessible spaces, programs and events for our multicultural community that extends to considering intersecting identities. We recognise that individuals within our community may face unique barriers to access and participation.

Priority 5: Fostering Community Capacity

We are committed to:	
5.1	Working with partners to support learning, skills development, and employment opportunities for our multicultural communities
5.2	Building the capacity of community groups to establish and independently sustain community projects and/or programs beyond the initial Yarra grants.
5.3	Promoting and facilitating accessible volunteering and community training opportunities to enhance employment opportunities for our multicultural community
5.4	Supporting and guiding multicultural communities to navigate council systems (e.g. planning processes, grant applications)

Monitoring, Reporting and Updating

In 2023, the Council streamlined its quarterly progress reports to enhance clarity and transparency for Councillors and the community, focusing on reducing the number of reports while increasing transparency. The revised Quarterly Report consolidates updates on strategic goals, the Council Plan, the budget, and capital projects, aiming to simplify reporting and effectively highlight our achievements.

The strategy updates and highlights section of the Q1 Quarterly Report will include a feature on the Multicultural Partnerships Policy. Officers are tasked with monitoring and documenting how practices align with the policy's principles and how our initiatives propel its key priorities forward.

The Multicultural Partnerships Policy is intended for long-term application; however, it is acknowledged that significant changes in the social environment, the broader policy landscape or Council's own policies that may necessitate updates, which will be initiated as and when needed.