

# **Cultural Diversity Action Plan 2024 - 2025**



## Acknowledgments

Cardinia Shire Council acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians of these lands the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people.

## Introduction

Cardinia Shire Council's ongoing commitment to support our multicultural residents and promote an inclusive community is reflected in the Cultural Diversity Plan 2024–25. It follows on from the 2019 - 2023 Cultural Diversity Plan, which resulted in 31 of 34 actions achieved. Successful deliverables under the plan include the Cardinia Refugee Festival, establishment and support for the CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) Network and Multicultural Advisory Groups as well as staff cultural awareness training. Of the 31 actions delivered, 11 are complete and 20 remain ongoing actions.

Cardinia Shire's rapid multicultural growth presents both opportunities and challenges. While cultural diversity enriches our community, it also necessitates a strategic approach to service provision, economic integration, and social inclusion. Addressing language barriers and enhancing local services are crucial steps towards fostering a supportive and cohesive multicultural environment. Moreover, combating racism and encouraging volunteerism are essential for building a resilient and vibrant community.

The insights from the 2021 Census data serve as a foundation for informed policymaking and community development initiatives. This affirms a model of social cohesion fostered through partnerships, connection, improved communication and engagement and celebration with our culturally diverse community.

Council is currently reviewing and updating the Social Justice and Equity Policy which will be the overarching Policy for Cultural Diversity planning. Council undertook a modified engagement for this two-year interim plan which involved consultations with some of Council's key partners who play a key role in the community and supporting our multicultural communities. The Cultural Diversity Plan 2024-25 continues to identify action under the four pillars of welcoming diversity, building connections, promoting participation, and sharing outcomes.



*Cardinia International Women's Day 2024*



*Cardinia International Women's Day 2024*

# Our Multicultural Community.

<p>The 2021 Census data reveals a significant demographic shift in Cardinia Shire, highlighting a substantial increase in the multicultural population. This report delves into the various aspects of this growth, examining the implications for community services, economic stability, and social cohesion.</p>
<p><b>Population Growth</b> Over the past two decades, Cardinia has seen its overseas-born population rise from 14% to 23%, with a current estimate suggesting a further increase to 24%-25%. This surge is attributed to migration from Southeast Asian countries, including India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, and Myanmar, contributing an additional 10,000 residents over five years.</p>
<p><b>Language Diversity</b> With one in five residents speaking a language other than English, linguistic diversity is pronounced. The predominant languages, apart from English, include Punjabi, Sinhalese, Hindi, Mandarin, Arabic, and Urdu, reflecting the varied cultural tapestry of the region.</p>
<p><b>Demographics</b> The average age group in Cardinia comprises young families, between 25 to 49 years old. A significant 75% of the multicultural populace resides in the growth corridor suburbs of Pakenham, Officer, and Beaconsfield.</p>
<p><b>Education and Income Disparity</b> Despite a higher level of education among residents, income levels remain low. Factors contributing to this disparity include the non-recognition of international qualifications, family responsibilities, and language barriers. Consequently, this leads to a high prevalence of mortgage stress, often exacerbated by single-income households due to limited English proficiency among spouses.</p>
<p><b>Service Accessibility</b> Accessing local services tailored to the needs of the multicultural community poses a challenge. Many residents are compelled to seek support outside the shire, indicating a gap in the provision of local services.</p>
<p><b>Racism</b> A concerning trend is the experience of racism, with one in three residents reporting such incidents, suggesting a need for robust community engagement and anti-racism initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Childcare and Volunteering</b> The community exhibits a high level of unpaid childcare responsibilities, yet there is a lower rate of volunteering, which may indicate potential barriers to civic participation.</p>

## Legislative context

There is a wide range of International, National, State, and local legislation and policies that aim to promote and enhance the rights and needs of our culturally diverse communities. These initiatives also direct the way services and programs are planned and delivered to support cultural diversity. They include international conventions legislation, policies, plans, and strategies which provide an important framework for the development of Council's Cultural Diversity Plan.

### *International*

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)*
- *International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1965)*

### *National*

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*

### *Victorian (State)*

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*

### *Cardinia Shire Council*

- Council Plan 2021 - 2025
- Liveability Plan 2017 - 2029
- Social Justice and Equity Policy 2019

## Cultural Diversity Action Plan 2019 – 2023 outcomes



*Cardinia Fusion Festival 2024*

Council's second Cultural Diversity Plan has achieved a broad range of action over the past four years. The deliverables include 31 out of 34 actions, leading to significant community benefits under the four pillar areas of welcoming diversity, building Connections, promoting participation, and sharing outcomes.

## **Outcomes achieved include:**

- Consulted members and developed a new Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group, including deciding upon a new name, changing from CALD Advisory to *Multicultural Advisory Group*.
- Developed and delivered the inaugural *Cardinia International Women's Day*.
- Developed and delivered the inaugural *Cardinia World Refugee Day Festival* in collaboration with partner organisations.
- Developed and delivered lunch box sessions as part of *staff Cultural Awareness Training*.
- Created Language Assist Training for staff on iThrive.
- Service Agreement with Foundation House for online Learning Module platform - Refugee and Asylum Seekers Experiences.
- Delivery of Harmony Day activities internally and externally.
- Supporting Women's Business Partnership via Living and Learning Pakenham.
- Facilitated the Cardinia CALD Network Group.
- Support for Cardinia Interfaith Network.
- Help is at Hand card, Community Services directory translated into the top 10 languages in Cardinia Shire.
- Created long Covid videos in 29 languages (Part of Local Partnership project).
- Translation of award-winning Salvation Army, You're the Boss financial literacy handbook into Dhari and Pasto.
- Be well, Stay Well project on Covid-health – 2021, working with 10 bi-cultural workers on various projects within the shire.
- Multicultural Community Connection Grants 2022-23.
- Supported welcome event for newly arrived Afghan families during 2022.
- Supported Afriaus iLeac project for Girl Child Empowerment in 2019.
- In partnership with Afriaus iLeac delivered a project for food relief and wellbeing, financial hardship resilience/ poverty alleviation in 2022 – 2023.
- Partnership to deliver Mentoring of South Sudanese Youth at Living and Learning Centre.
- Four short story films on Refugee experience 2021.
- Translation symbol included in Council's contact panel.
- Multicultural hub feasibility study completed in 2022.

## **Summary Feedback from Consultation**

This year we consulted with nine partner organisations, Cardinia CALD Network Group, Multicultural Advisory Group, Cardinia Interfaith Network, Living Learning Pakenham, Sikh leaders, International Women's Day participants, Chin Community, Afriaus iLeac and Centre for Multicultural Youth, resulting in a total of 127 comments and suggestions. The model used to engage organisations included face to face meetings, group meetings and an online jam board for feedback.

We undertook a reduced engagement for this interim 2-year plan as Council is currently reviewing and updating the Social Justice and Equity Policy, due to be completed by the end of 2025, which will be the overarching Policy for Cultural Diversity planning.

The consultation focused on the four pillars of the Action Plan, which are:

- Welcoming diversity
- Building connections
- Promoting participation
- Sharing outcomes.

The 127 comments and suggestions collected were further broken-down into 7 main themes to capture and clearly reflect what topics are of importance to the community and its needs. This is reflected in the Table 1 below.

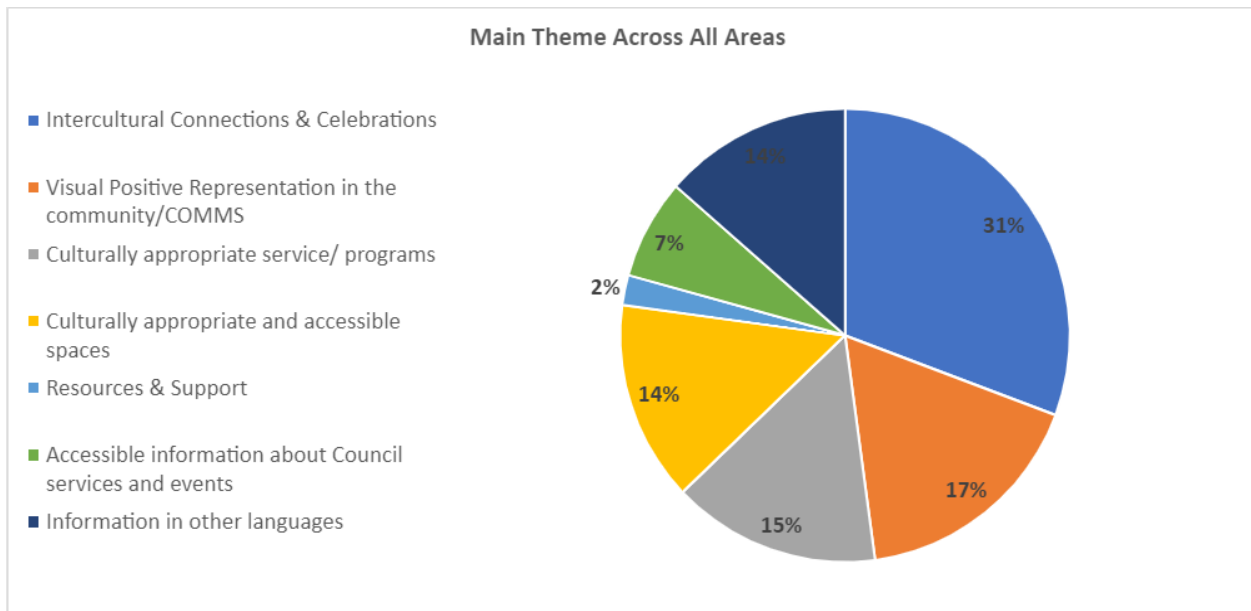


Table 1. represents the main themes across all organization

## Priority 1. Welcoming diversity



Cardinia Fusion Festival 2024

Our residents have told us that they face significant challenges when settling in Cardinia Shire. These challenges include language and communication issues, complex needs arising from their arrival and many feel that the broader community does not accept them. Working together to support the expression of all cultures, languages and faiths is an important first step and Council will continue to build a welcoming community through local leadership, promoting inclusion and addressing racism and discrimination to create a richer and more vibrant community for all our residents.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline
1. Celebrate and foster our Shire’s growing cultural and religious diversity	1.1 Deliver an annual Harmony Day/International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination event during Cultural Diversity Week	2020 - 2024
	1.2 Support Cardinia Shire’s Interfaith Network to deliver events	2024 - 2025
	1.3 Increase positive visual representation of cultural diversity in our communities and communications	2020 - 2024
2. Strengthen Council’s commitment to providing an inclusive community	2.1 Promote the Shire as a Refugee Welcome Zone in community facilities	2024 - 2025
	2.2 Deliver an annual Refugee Week event in partnership with CALD community organisations (Fusion Festival).	2024 - 2025
	2.3 Deliver International Women’s Day Celebration for social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women in the shire.	2024 - 2025
	2.4 Increase the use of languages other than English in Council communications	2020 - 2024
	3.1 Facilitate internal opportunities for interactive staff workshop to increase cultural awareness	2024 - 2025
3. Create a greater understanding of our new and emerging communities	3.2 Promote cultural and religious events through internal communication forums	2020 - 2024
	3.3 Provide Translating Interpreter Service (TIS) workshops	2023 - 2025
	3.4. Multicultural Booklet on Council services	2023 - 2025
	4.1 Anti –Racism Project Network to build capacity, support and resources to best support communities facing racism.	2020 - 2024
5. Provide culturally appropriate and accessible spaces	5.1 Identify Council Spaces for access to accommodate culturally diverse communities to engage in activities	2020 - 2024

## Priority 2. Building Connections



Cardinia Fusion Festival 2023

Isolation and a lack of access to key services and physical infrastructure has been identified as a significant issue for our new communities. Supporting our residents from culturally diverse backgrounds to successfully participate and contribute to their communities requires a strong partnership approach across a range of settings. Through platforms that provide for collaboration and learning from each other we will enhance our capacity to respond more effectively to our new communities.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline
7. Inter-agency partnerships. Develop a sustainable model to collate and disseminate information and deliver programs to our multicultural communities	7.1 Continue to work with and develop the CALD Network	2024 - 2025
	7.2 Advocate for increased services tailored to multicultural community needs.	2024 - 2025
	7.3 Co-design deliver and evaluate programs	2024 - 2025
	7.4 Secure funding to continue the programs	2024 - 2025
8. Support Victoria Police to gain a better understanding of our new and emerging communities	8.1 Provide opportunities for community leaders to spend time with local police officers	2020 - 2024
	8.2 Culturally appropriate service/ programs	2020 - 2024
9. Provide professional development opportunities for support agencies	9. 1 Lead the Cardinia Shire CALD Network	2024 - 2025
	9.2 Building cultural competencies of key stakeholders.	2020 - 2024



### Priority 3. Promoting participation



Harmony Day 2024

Participation can take many forms, and it evolves as new communities evolve. Council actively encourages all residents to participate in civic life and engage with their neighbours and local communities. Fundamental to achieving this goal is ensuring that information that is provided by Council is in a format that is accessible for all. It is also important that new communities can participate in decisions that will enhance their wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline
11. Provide a voice for the shire's multicultural residents	11.1 Facilitate Council's Multicultural Advisory Group meetings	2024 - 2025
	11.2 Provide communications with ongoing promotional opportunities for inclusion in communications campaigns	2020 - 2024
12. Enhance Council's communication processes to reflect the shire's growing cultural diversity	12.2 Provide communications with ongoing promotional opportunities for inclusion in communications campaigns	2020 - 2024
	12.3 Support staff developing community engagement plans to ensure multicultural communities are consulted.	2024 - 2025
13. Improve access to support resources targeted at multicultural communities	13.1 Utilise existing Council spaces to include culturally diverse communities' activities.	2020 - 2024

## Priority 4. Sharing outcomes



Cardinia Shire Multicultural Advisory Group 2023 - 2024

While respecting our differences is necessary in an open and inclusive community, it is also important to acknowledge that we have much in common. We have much to gain, individually and collectively by working together to build a positive and progressive future in our growing municipality. Sharing stories and celebrating the successes of the Shire's growing cultural diversity will provide for a greater understanding of our new communities and an insight to our commonalities, which are much greater than our differences.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline
14. Showcase the achievements of the shire's multicultural communities	14.1 Promote events and initiatives in Council's Connect magazine	2024 - 2025
	14.2 Provide media releases to local media outlets	2020 - 2024
	14.3 Contribute stories internally through Council's communication outlets	2024 - 2025
15. Review, refresh and update the current plan	15.1 Report the plan's progress	2024 - 2025
	15.2 Ensure the plan is proactive and maintaining a responsive needs of the shire's multicultural communities	2024 - 2025



International Women's Day 2024