

# Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2023





# Order of proceedings

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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 Ingrid Stitt MP,  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

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Presentation of awards

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Networking and canapes

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Conclusion of event

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# Message from the Governor

It's a pleasure to host the 2023 Victorian Multicultural Awards here at Government House.

These awards celebrate the rich diversity of our State and recognise the important work being done by individuals, as well as by groups and organisations. Each of the 2023 nominees and recipients have played an important role in contributing to a culture of inclusion and diversity in Victoria.

I'm pleased to see these awards become a continuous part of the ceremonial occasions of Government House and a symbol of the values of this State.

On behalf of all Victorians, congratulations on your award and thank you for ensuring our community remains open, diverse and respectful of all those who contribute to our wellbeing as a community.

**Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC**

Governor of Victoria

# Message from the Premier

I'm so proud to be the Premier of Australia's most culturally diverse state.

Around 30 per cent of Victorians are born overseas.

We have 300 different ancestries, speak 260 languages, and believe in 130 faiths.

This incredible diversity needs deliberate and genuine inclusion.

That's why these awards are so important.

They're a chance for the Victorian Government and the VMC to recognise the individuals and organisations who foster that inclusion.

Multiculturalism, diversity and intersectionality are at the heart of Victorian Government policy.

But policy is only as good as the people who practice it.

That is where government meets community, I want to thank everyone here tonight for advancing the cause of multiculturalism.

Whether you're a business owner who innovates, contributes to the economy and creates jobs, an emergency responder who keeps multicultural communities safe, or an organiser of a cultural event that spreads joy, understanding and friendship.

Your work makes multiculturalism one of our greatest assets and benefits all six and a half-million Victorians.

Thank you for your dedication.

**The Honourable Jacinta Allan MP**

Premier of Victoria

# Message from the Minister

Congratulations to the 2023 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence winners, finalists, and nominees.

It's a pleasure and a privilege learning about the extraordinary work of everyone here tonight - such selfless efforts deserve recognition.

On a personal note, I feel celebrating your achievements is the perfect way to begin my tenure as Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The VMC plays an important role in connecting culturally diverse grassroots voices to Government and I am eager to continue developing strong relationships between my department and this important commission.

I would like to acknowledge the VMC Chairperson Viv Nguyen for her outstanding leadership; we have worked together closely in recent months and have established a great connection.

As 2023 comes to an end, I look forward to a strong 2024, with meaningful conversations, decisive actions, and significant outcomes for multicultural Victoria.

**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

# Message from the Chairperson

This is the 22nd annual Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

As Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, I want to extend my congratulations and gratitude to all our champions of multiculturalism.

This year's winners are everything we ask Victorians to be.

They serve their communities, foster cross-cultural understanding and drive us closer to racial equity.

We know these individuals do their work without the thought or need for awards.

But the VMC believes in the power of recognition, and one of our fundamental principles is to promote and celebrate our communities.

Not only because they deserve to be acknowledged but because it helps the broader population to understand who we are, what we need and what we bring.

Congratulations to everyone who is being honoured here tonight.

## **Vivienne Nguyen AM**

Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission



# Arts Award

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

## Winner



### Nandita Chakraborty

Nandita Chakraborty advocates for improved policy settings and programs to support those with non-visible disabilities, especially across multicultural communities. Her continued work, installations, and film highlight the challenges that face women from multicultural backgrounds that have nonvisible disabilities.

## Highly Commended



### The Social Studio

The Social Studio is a not-for-profit social enterprise working alongside refugee and migrant creatives in fashion, design and the arts.





# Business Award

Recognising businesses that provide outstanding service to Victorian multicultural communities and lead the way in building a culturally diverse and culturally safe workplace.

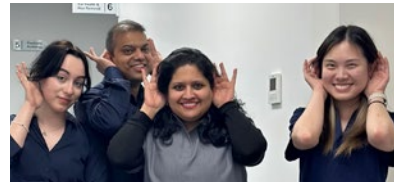
## Winners



### Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd

Comm Unity Plus Services works with diverse communities throughout Melbourne's Western and Northern regions, delivering a range of prevention and early intervention programs to disadvantaged, marginalised and socially excluded community members. Through Community Education, Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre, Children's Contact Services, Neighbourhood House, and a range of community engagement and development activities.

## Highly Commended



### All Ears Hearing

All Ears Hearing is an audiology clinic committed to custom, patient-centred care and proven treatments. Founder, Mini Gupta, immigrated from Delhi, India, in 2006. Her lived experience means she has a deep understanding of the challenges facing immigrant patients and staff, and/or Australian-born people from multicultural backgrounds. Inclusivity and empathy are at the forefront of the clinic's workforce and services.



# Community Innovation Award

Recognising short-term projects or programs completed in the last 18 months that used outside-the-box thinking to address a problem facing a culturally diverse community and that shares knowledge about a culture with a wider audience.

## Winner



### Wellsprings for Women

This project has empowered people of African heritage to take back harmful narratives of their experiences and identities and centre real voices and issues. The project collected hundreds of stories and experiences that gave rise to an exhibit, films, workshops, and a digital story map of Greater Melbourne.

## Highly Commended



### Theresa Sengaga Ssali

The African Women and Families Network was founded by Theresa Ssali in 2011. It is a trusted grassroots community organisation, well known in the sector for providing support to highly vulnerable members of marginalised migrant communities, who were already isolated prior to COVID-19.



# Education Awards

Recognising early childhood staff, services, schools, vocational education and training settings and not-for-profit organisations that deliver outstanding learning and teaching programs that enhance the social inclusion, wellbeing and education outcomes for children and students from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

## Winner - Early Childhood Education



### City of Casey Best Start Cultural Communication Improvement Team

City of Casey's Best Start Cultural Improvement Team is a collaborative group of early years professionals working on improving cross-cultural communication between early years services and low and non-English speaking families. The improvement team is driving change to increase interpreter utilization in kindergartens, supporting greater participation, partnerships and inclusion.

## Highly Commended - Early Childhood Education



### ViệtSpeak

ViệtSpeak is a community-based organisation that is volunteer run and based in Melbourne's western suburbs. The group formed after the closure of the country's only Vietnamese bilingual program in Footscray Primary School in 2020 and comprises parents, community advocates, language educators and researchers.



## Education Awards

### Winner - School Education



#### River Nile School

River Nile School transforms young refugee and asylum seeker women's lives through education.

### Highly Commended - School Education



#### Debney Meadows Primary School

Debney Meadows Primary School and Kensington Neighbourhood House have partnered to create the Debney Meadows Community Hub, a space for families from diverse cultural backgrounds to connect with the wider community. The Hub celebrates diversity and strengthens intercultural capability by providing opportunities for people to learn, share, and celebrate together.

## Winner - Pre-accredited community-based Education and Training



### River Nile Learning Centre

The RNLC's support extends beyond the classroom empowering generations of newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. Graduates of the River Nile School emerge as empowered individuals, more confident in their English language skills, better equipped for the Australian job market and better able to thrive in the Victorian community.

## Highly Commended - Pre-accredited community-based Education and Training



Brotherhood  
of St Laurence

### BSL Cross Cultural Consultancy

Brotherhood of St Laurence's Cross-Cultural Consultancy in the Children's Programs Division hold a strong vision of cultural identity being essential to children and an individual's healthy sense of who they are and where they belong. Cultural and racial pride is essential for resilience building in the face of discrimination stress.



## Education Awards

### Winner - Vocational Education and Training Accredited Education & Training



#### VU Together Against Racism Working Group

The Together Against Racism working group are students and staff from diverse backgrounds who have led and co-created innovative online training. The group spent eight months co-designing content to move a learner from being 'not racist' to actively 'anti-racist'. The outcome goes well beyond compliance toward a transformative learning experience.

### Highly Commended - Vocational Education and Training Accredited Education & Training



#### Gordon Institute of TAFE

The Mumgu-dhal program at The Gordon inspires and supports young First Nations students to attain their education and career aspirations. Thriving within a dynamic realm of hands-on education and ongoing support, this experience not only nurtures self-assurance for the students but also creates valuable connections to culture, country, and heritage.



# Emergency Services Award

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

## Winner



### **Victorian State Emergency Service Greater Dandenong Unit**

The Victoria State Emergency Service Greater Dandenong Unit has focused on building an engaged, inclusive, and culturally diverse volunteer membership, with the unit now able to provide better support and establish stronger relationships with the varied cultural groups that call Greater Dandenong home.



# Health Award

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

## Winner



### **Program for Refugee Immunisation Monitoring and Education**

PRIME supports and delivers culturally appropriate catch-up vaccinations for refugee background communities and increases immunisation coverage. PRIME teams include bicultural, multilingual staff who are embedded in local communities, working in local government and asylum seeker healthcare. Through supporting immunisation, PRIME delivers health, social and economic benefits to new arrival communities and to Victoria.

## Highly Commended



### **Silva Nazaretian**

Silva is a dedicated advocate working tirelessly to meet the health and wellbeing needs of multicultural communities. Through co-design and open communication, she supports and promotes effective health messaging, ensuring it reaches and resonates with multicultural communities. Her efforts are amplified through a community champions network fostering inclusivity and empowerment.





# Justice Award

Recognising people and organisations that promote or improve access for multicultural communities to the justice system, support or advocate for multicultural communities to address systemic issues within the justice system or promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the legal sector.

## Winner



### **Northern Community Legal Centre and South-East Monash Legal Service**

The Safe Landing Program supports victim/survivors of family violence on temporary visas to recover and thrive, by assisting them to navigate the legal system. Integrated family, family violence and migration lawyers assist people to access visas which allow them independence from perpetrators, intervention orders, financial compensation and family law orders.

## Highly Commended



### **Eastern Community Legal Centre & Eastern Health**

ECLC is a leading multidisciplinary community legal centre in Victoria which works to prevent problems, progress fair outcomes and build community resilience. Its vision is: Human Rights; Fairness and Justice for all. The aim to prevent injustice, promote equitable access to legal help and to empower communities.



# 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 Greater Bendigo

Since becoming the first local government in Australia to become an accredited Welcoming City in 2020, the City of Greater Bendigo is recognised amongst peers as a leader and innovator for inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds

## Highly Commended



### SALDHIG project

The SALDHIG project has supported Somali-Australian young people, their families and community over the past two years. It has been an innovative, best-practice example of inclusive community development work that has positively impacted over 4000 community members and has provided capacity building opportunities for professionals from 35 Banyule services.



# Media Award

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

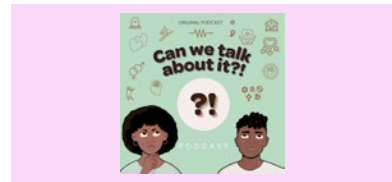
## Winner



### **iMPACT Magazine**

iMPACT Magazine is a publication with deep connections to Victoria's multicultural communities. It tells their stories, airs their issues and celebrates their contributions. By showcasing the inspirational stories of migrants and refugees, iMPACT promotes Australia's successful brand of multiculturalism and the high levels of social cohesion it delivers.

## Highly Commended



### **Can We Talk About It?! Podcast**

Can We Talk About It?! was created and produced by Charmaine Hunzwi who is a Community Leader in the Victorian African Australian community. Charmaine's passion is creating safe spaces for underrepresented voices to be heard and visibly seen in a strength-based perspective by the wider community.



# Police Awards

Recognising outstanding contributions to multicultural harmony in the field of policing.

## Winners – Police Annual Multicultural Award

### Detective Senior Constable Tana Griffiths



For six years Senior Constable Griffiths has worked with female victims/survivors of violence

and assault. She has assisted Wellsprings for Women and made regular presentations to female survivors outlining the role of police as well as helping her colleagues to better understand CALD women and girls and their fear of making police reports.

### Inspector Dean Clinton



Inspector Dean Clinton is committed to the principles of Neighbourhood Policing. Among his

achievements is establishing the Hume Neighbourhood Policing Safety Committee, becoming a committee member of the Hume Interfaith Network, the Hume Multicultural Advisory Group, the Local Safety Committee and the Aboriginal Local Area Network.

### Leading Senior Constable Heath Williams



Leading Senior Constable Williams has demonstrated the best values of Victoria Police in his

role as Monash Youth Resource Officer, and Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer. His commitment, dedication and passion make him a very worthy recipient of a Police Multicultural Award and a very good example to his fellow police officers.

## Winner – Multicultural Media Award

### Diversity Recruitment Program Media Campaign



The project, funded by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, aims

diversify our workforce. It has 230 participants with 56 different cultural backgrounds and already 78 have passed the VicPol entrance examination and 39 have begun their training at the Police Academy.

## Winner – Police Community Exemplary Award

### Ms. Brooke Harding – Ramadan Care Packages



Ms. Brooke Harding who is a senior project officer with the Mental Health Centre of Excellence

and Innovation of Victoria Police. A former resident of the United Arab Emirates, Brooke prepared and distributed Iftar Care packages containing dates and water during Ramadan.

## Winners – Protective Service Officer Multicultural Award

### PSO Sergeant Pushp Sidhu



PSO Sergeant Pushp Sidhu has worked closely with the Hindu and Sikh communities and

proactively represents police in skill and career programs, and LGBTQI+ conferences. She supported the community soon after the attack on Ukraine by enlisting the support of a Russian-speaking PSO colleague and organizing a community engagement event.

### PSO Sergeant Simarpal Kaur



After arriving from India in 2009, she came to Victoria in 2014 joining Victoria Police as a PSO. She

has acted as a conduit with her own Sikh community, educating them in a gurdwara context on family violence, mental health issues, crime prevention and police and PSO recruitment.



# Refugee Advocacy Award

Recognising people and organisations that support or advocate for the rights and needs of newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers, improve access to settlement services and/or employment pathways, and create opportunities for participation, contribution and belonging.

## Winner



### Free to Feed

Free to Feed is a not-for-profit social enterprise creating empowering employment opportunities for people seeking asylum and refugees. Through the power of shared food experiences.

## Highly Commended



### Bendigo Karen Youth Network

Bendigo Karen Youth Network is run by and for young people, with the goal of bringing young people together. Through living in harmony while pursuing their goal of promoting and fostering cross-cultural understanding.



# Sport Award

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

## Winner



### City in the Community

City in the Community and the Melbourne City Football Club have used their shared love of football to positively impact the well-being of young people across Melbourne, connecting with diverse community groups to promote multiculturalism to their local communities and fan base.

## Highly Commended



### Bendigo Community Health Services

Bendigo Community Health Services are a dedicated and willing organisation who has made an impact of the lives of Karen Refugees in Bendigo. They are committed to working with community members and services to develop and co-design programs that create and support a diverse community.



# Youth Leadership Award

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

## Winner



### Rhea Werner

Rhea spearheads the Embrace Collective Youth - Australia's first nationwide youth body-image non-profit, championing multicultural youth voices in healthcare-policy. Recognised by the United Nations and the Malala Fund, her advocacy secured \$55 million in policy support and a \$6.2 million government grant, positively impacting 845,000 culturally-diverse lives in Victoria and worldwide.

## Highly Commended



### Bendigo Karen Youth Network

Bendigo Karen Youth Network is run by and for young people, with the goal of bringing young people together. Through living in harmony while pursuing their goal of promoting and fostering cross-cultural understanding.





# 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.

## Finalists



### Ian Green OAM

Ian Green OAM, Chairperson of the Great Stupa has been a practicing Buddhist in the Tibetan tradition for over 40 and has made a significant contribution towards interfaith dialogue and social cohesion amongst Victorian multicultural faith groups by fostering social inclusion and bringing them together to celebrate peace and harmony.



### Cultura Pako Festa 2023

Pako Festa is the largest free celebration of cultural diversity in Australia, celebrating community spirit, interconnectedness, belonging and harmony. The street festival is accessible to all who want to share the enriching experience of Australian multiculturalism, with 100,000 people contributing to the community cohesion needed so much in today's world.



## Premier's Award for Community Harmony



### Rabbi Yaakov Glasman AM

Rabbi Yaakov Glasman AM has for the past 20 years been working to advance multiculturalism and to strengthen relationships between numerous culturally and linguistically diverse communities. During this time, he has passionately devoted himself towards promoting Victoria's greatest asset – its richly diverse and multicultural community.



## City of Whittlesea

### City of Whittlesea - Community Activation team

The City of Whittlesea is an LGA located north of Melbourne and is one of the fastest-growing municipalities. Community-Activation-Team (CAT), works with people in place to develop their capacity that foster community connection and build social cohesion, and well-being. The CAT supports multicultural communities by building their resilience, confidence, skills.



# Multicultural Honour Roll

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

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**Naba Masad Alfayadh**

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**Ayesha Bux**

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**Giuseppe Cannata**

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**Rana Ebrahimi**

---

**Ruwangi Fernando**

---

**Farhat Firdous**

---

**Rabbi Yaakov Glasman AM**

---

**Kyriakos Gold**

---

**George Gregorio**

---

**Bekim Hasani**

---

**Eva Hussain**

---

**Siegfredo M Jover**

---

**Gurinder Kaur**

---

**Arfa Sarfaraz Khan**

---

**Dr Raj Khillan**

---

**Manzoor Ahmad Mian JP**

---

**Edward Joseph Micallef**

---

**Nawal Kishore Moudigal**

---

**Mohamed Hadi Omer**

---

**Asvin Phorugngam**

---

**Nola Radiotis**

---

**Hadi Saab**

---

**Helen Stamoulis**

---

**Kaja Starinskaskas**

---

**Mannie Kaur Verma**

---

**Deepak Vinayak OAM**

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**Gloria Yuen**

# Thank you to our outgoing Commissioners

In September 2023, the VMC farewelled the following Commissioners and thanked them for their unwavering and dedicated work:

- ▶ **Abiola Akinbiyi** (Community Representative Commissioner)
- ▶ **Lunorphare (Luna) Folly** (Youth Commissioner)
- ▶ **Shankar Kasynathan** (Commissioner)

# Abiola Akinbiyi



The Victorian Multicultural Commission extends its deepest gratitude to Abiola Akinbiyi for her exceptional service as a Community Representative Commissioner from September 2021 to September 2023.

Throughout her term with the Commission, Abiola has been an extraordinary champion of diversity, equity, and social justice. Her extensive background in health, combined with her leadership roles at the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria has been instrumental in adding her voice to the advocacy on overseas qualifications assessments, particularly in the health sector.

As the founder of Changepreneurs, she has tirelessly mentored young African Australian and culturally diverse women, empowering them to thrive. In addition, Abi contributed to ensuring the African culture continues to be recognised on the map of Victoria's calendar of cultural festivals in her role with the African Music and Cultural Festival during her time with the Commission.

# Lunorphare (Luna) Folly



The Victorian Multicultural Commission warmly acknowledges Luna Folly's dedicated service as a Youth Commissioner from September 2021 to September 2023.

Coming from a Togolese refugee background, Luna has been a powerful advocate for young people and disadvantaged communities, particularly from regional Victoria. As a Youth Officer for the Ballarat African Association and the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, Luna has worked tirelessly to address critical issues such as youth unemployment and societal discrimination. He has used his passion for sport as a platform to connect regional and metropolitan multicultural communities, consistently striving to be a voice for those who often go unheard. His commitment to educational programs and his vision of making Victoria a beacon of diversity and inclusion have been truly inspiring.

# Shankar Kasynathan



The Victorian Multicultural Commission extends its heartfelt appreciation to Shankar Kasynathan for his dedicated service as a Commissioner from September 2019 to September 2023.

A refugee who has transformed his personal experience into powerful advocacy, Shankar has been a pivotal figure in championing systems inequity and adding his passion to the advocacy efforts during his time at the VMC. With his expertise in communications and public policy, he has worked extensively with refugee and migrant communities in various territories, particularly in the area of community sponsorship and First Nations issues.

As the Chair of the Loddon Mallee and Barwon Regional Advisory Councils, Shankar has consistently demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to social justice and understanding of multicultural communities.

# Thank you

The Victorian Multicultural Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the organisations featured on the following pages for sponsoring the Awards this year.







# Building a brighter future for all.

We take great pride in our commitment to support multicultural communities, celebrating and honouring their vibrant heritages alongside them.

We recognise the importance of creating better experiences for our customers through understanding their needs, fostering empathy and understanding by deepening relationships, enhancing financial inclusion and promoting social cohesion so our customers feel supported.

We bring to life our purpose by ensuring strong grassroots and authentic engagement, developing strong networks and relationships, forming strategic partnerships with government, multicultural bodies and communities and delivering meaningful and relevant community programs.

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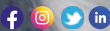
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