



Victorian Multicultural Commission

Annual Report 2023-24

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Multicultural Commission acknowledges the First Peoples and traditional owners of the land we now call Victoria. We acknowledge the ongoing spiritual, cultural and material connection of all First Peoples to land, water, skies and resources. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The Victorian Multicultural Commission supports continued steps towards reconciliation, and the right of First Peoples to participate in decision making that affects them.



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Message from the Chairperson

I am pleased to present the Victorian Multicultural Commission's 2023-24 annual report. The report captures a year that marked an important milestone for the Commission – its 40th anniversary, which allowed us to reflect on our achievements, as well as reminding us of the work that remains. It was also an incredibly challenging year, where overseas events triggered fears and anxiety within the community.

The Commission started the year with a review of its strategic direction to ensure we remain fit-for-purpose and equipped to reflect the increasing diversity of our multicultural society. Victoria has one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. More than half our population was born overseas or has at least one parent who was born overseas. Around 30 per cent of Victorians were born overseas, compared with the OECD average of approximately 12 per cent. Victorians speak more than 290 languages and dialects, and practise more than 135 faiths.

The strategic review reconfirmed the Commission's strengths. This includes its deep knowledge of and connection with diverse communities. This financial year, following machinery of government changes, the Commission returned to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. This allows the Commission to better support government priorities, including:

- promotion
- advocacy
- community engagement

In 2023, the Commission also celebrated 40 years since its establishment as Victoria's Ethnic Affairs Commission in 1983. As we look back on our history, the Commission will build on its tradition of:

- undertaking consultation, research, investigation and advocacy for issues that matter to culturally diverse communities and at the direction of the Minister
- advancing full participation for culturally diverse communities in Victoria's social, political and economic life, including access to government services
- promoting and preserving harmony and unity across Victoria's culturally diverse communities
- promoting and preserving cultural diversity by celebrating and exploring cultural identity and cultural heritage

At its heart, the Commission is a trusted leader that provides the connective tissue between communities and government. It also acts as a guiding light in difficult times to preserve and protect social harmony and cohesion. The Commission has demonstrated this, over many years: in its response to the Bali bombings in 2002; and, for example, in the aftermath of the 2005 Cronulla riots.

This role was tested again, in the past year, by overseas events. In particular, the conflict in Gaza is impacting local communities, whose trauma and grief is exacerbated by the role of social media and a 24/7 news cycle. Much of the Commission's efforts focus on maintaining dialogue with community and faith leaders. These efforts support communities to engage with the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. The Commission also collaborates with community organisations, particularly those representing women and young people, to preserve and protect harmony. This work is made possible by the trust and credibility the Commission has built with communities over 40 years.

The Commission has continued to highlight important contributions by multicultural communities through the Multicultural Awards for Excellence. These awards are for individuals and organisations across arts, business, education and employment. In addition, the Multicultural Film Festival 2023 showcased a stunning range of stories and experiences from diverse communities.

The Commission maintained its community engagement activities in 2023-24. It appointed new Regional Advisory Council (RAC) members for 2023-25, and held the first Regional Advisory Forum for 150 RAC members. The forum explored solutions to issues including mental health, prevention of family violence, racism and employment. I extend my deep appreciation to Minister Colin Brooks for his support – and thank Minister Ingrid Stitt for her commitment to multicultural affairs and for her collaboration with the Commission. I also thank outgoing Commissioners Abiola Akinbiyi, Shankar Kasynathan and Luna Folly for their dedication to the Commission’s work.

I welcome Commissioners Gabrielle Marchetti, Sylvia Coombe and Krushnadevsinh (Kano) Ravalji. I extend my congratulations to commissioner Judy Tang for her reappointment. The Commission appreciated the decision by the Victorian Government to hold a state funeral in honour of former Commission Chairperson, Stefan Romaniw OAM. Stefan’s extraordinary legacy includes the many lives he changed for the better, and the values he passed to the next generation of community leaders.

The Commission has experienced many operational changes and challenges in the past year. I thank our staff for staying the course, as we deliver on our priorities and support multicultural communities, and I greatly appreciate their unwavering dedication to the Commission.

Finally, I thank our colleagues at Multicultural for Multicultural Affairs and Fairer Victoria, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and other departments and agencies. We will continue to work together to support Government priorities and deliver the best possible outcomes for Victoria’s diverse communities.



Vivienne Nguyen AM
Chairperson,
Victorian Multicultural Commission



About the Victorian Multicultural Commission

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) supports and advocates for culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse Victorians.

The VMC was established in 1983 as a statutory body. It is legislated under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*. The VMC's work:

- promotes cultural diversity across all areas of society
- advocates on behalf of multicultural communities to all levels of government
- encourages full participation by all Victorians, regardless of their cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

The VMC provides an important link between communities and the Victorian Government. It fosters social cohesion and promotes cultural diversity by using a strengths-based approach. It emphasises the importance of genuine community engagement and community-based solutions.

The VMC promotes the cultural, social and economic benefits of multiculturalism. This includes advocating for tangible, systemic change within government departments and agencies, for example by:

- creating workforces that reflect the true diversity of Victorian communities
- incorporating outcome measures in data collation.

The VMC also helps to improve public services to make them more culturally inclusive and accessible.

Primary stakeholders include:

- multicultural and multifaith communities (organisations, service providers, peak bodies, faith groups, businesses and individuals)
- the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Victorian Government departments, agencies, statutory bodies and other commissions.

Mission Statement

We strengthen our community through support, celebrations and advocacy for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.

The role and impact of the VMC over the past four decades

To mark its 40th anniversary, the VMC commissioned a report by the Social Research Centre to understand the role and impact of the VMC over the years.

The comprehensive report – which drew on various research methods including stakeholder interviews, surveys and literature reviews – examines the breadth of the Commission’s contribution to shaping multicultural Victoria.

The report emphasises that it is the range of Commission activities, over four decades, that have combined to make the contribution of the Commission so valuable.

The VMC 40th Year Anniversary Research Report draws on various research methods including stakeholder interviews, surveys and literature reviews to examine the breadth of the Commission’s contribution to shaping multicultural Victoria:

- respect the VMC and strongly support a Commission that is independent, bipartisan and well-resourced
- want the VMC to continue tackling racism and discrimination as its top priority
- want the VMC to work across all dimensions of social policy, amplifying the voices and experiences of Victoria’s diverse communities on relevant debates and developments
- have a positive view of the quality of the events and activities the VMC supports
- want to better understand how the VMC influences committees and government processes
- agree that the VMC will need to use intersectional approaches in its work.

Clearly, over time, the VMC has done much to support and shape the foundations of our multicultural society – and to promote a more inclusive and respectful approach to cultural diversity.

There are, however, many policy areas and systemic issues – such as representation, access and inclusion – that require an ongoing focus. We have summarised the findings of the study on page 5 of this report. You can also [view the full research report](#).

The Commission’s role in supporting multicultural Victoria

The Commission’s enabling legislation has changed three times over the past 40 years. Nonetheless, our core legislative mandate has stayed the same:

- undertaking consultation, research, investigation and advocacy for issues of importance to Victoria’s culturally diverse communities and at the direction of the Minister
- advancing full participation for members of cultural communities in the social, political and economic life in Victoria, including access to government services
- promoting and preserving harmony and unity across Victoria’s culturally diverse communities
- promoting and preserving cultural diversity through the celebration and exploration of cultural identity and cultural heritage.

This statutory authorisation provides the Commission with unique and direct access to the Victorian Government and government agencies:

- The Commission’s legislated governance structures facilitate wide-ranging consultation, allowing the Commission to represent and amplify the voices of marginalised ethnic communities as they settle in and contribute to Victoria
- The Commission is led by appointed Commissioners, who act in good faith and without partisanship as they deal with community issues.

Snapshot of Victoria's cultural diversity

Victoria proudly supports diversity, welcoming people of every cultural heritage from around the world. The 2021 Census showed that Victoria's population grew to 6.5 million, an increase from 5.9 million in 2016.

The data also highlights that 58.7 per cent of Victorians have at least one parent born **overseas** and that while 67.2 per cent of Victorians communicate in English at home, 30.2 per cent of households use a language other than English.



In Greater Melbourne, 41.1 per cent of residents were born overseas. For Victoria as a whole, this figure is 35 per cent. Among Victorians, the primary countries of birth are Australia, accounting for 65 per cent, followed by India with 4 per cent, England with 2.7 per cent, China with 2.6 per cent and New Zealand with 1.5 per cent.



Victoria's linguistic landscape includes Mandarin, spoken by 3.4 per cent, Vietnamese by 1.8 per cent, Greek by 1.6 per cent and, also by 1.6 per cent, Punjabi.



Victoria also comprises a diverse array of religions and faith groups, with 40.9 per cent of the population identifying as Christian, followed by Islam with 4.2 per cent, Hinduism with 3.3 per cent and Buddhism with 3.1 per cent. This compares with 39.3 per cent of Victorians who identify with no religion.





VMC Commissioners

The VMC is led by 12 Commissioners. The Commissioners represent the VMC's values and work closely with communities. The Commissioners are committed Victorians, who actively participate in community activities. They understand the challenges facing culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Commissioners engage with community groups and faith groups at a grassroots level. They seek to understand the issues facing multicultural communities and to foster collaboration and unity.

Commissioners attend, speak at and support community-led events and initiatives. They work together to elevate multicultural voices and advocate on behalf of communities, across government.

Commissioners also support, advocate for and represent community perspectives in committees and forums at local, state and national levels. They meet regularly to plan strategies and address community issues.

Commissioners are appointed for a four-year term. The Community Representative Commissioner and Youth Commissioner are exceptions; they are each appointed for two years.

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 Folly (Luna) (Youth Commissioner)
- Shankar Kasynathan (Commissioner).

Current Commissioners

Vivienne (Viv) Nguyen AM – Chairperson

Current term: August 2023 – August 2026

First appointed: 24 August 2019



Arriving in Australia as a 12-year-old refugee, Viv is now a passionate advocate for genuine community engagement and cultural diversity.

Viv has an extensive track record as a business executive and leader in the corporate, community and government sectors. She has held roles at AMP Asset Management and at ANZ Banking Group. She was the Head of Risk for the ANZ Margin Lending portfolio and Group Head of Diversity.

Viv became a member of the Order of Australia for her significant service to Victoria's multicultural communities. She played a critical role in the Victorian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is a member of the Victorian government's Anti-Racism Taskforce (to inform and drive the state's Anti-Racism Strategy).

Viv is also a member of various interdepartmental committees and ministerial advisory taskforces and councils, which inform, support and represent communities, and a tireless advocate for grassroots participation and representation in civic life.

Viv is a recipient of the Centenary Medal, Victorian Women's Honour Roll and a Paul Harris Fellow with Rotary International.

Bwe Thay – Deputy Chairperson

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2019



Bwe is a spirited advocate for multiculturalism in Australia, dedicated to enhancing the capacity and leadership of diverse communities. With a focus on leadership development, education, and employment opportunities, Bwe works closely with individuals and communities while also influencing policy at the highest levels of service providers, businesses, and all levels of government.

Throughout his career, Bwe has held numerous leadership roles within Victoria's multicultural sector and currently serves as an Attaché for the Mental Health Foundation of Australia. His work has earned widespread recognition for advancing advocacy, promoting community service, and achieving professional excellence.

Known for his practical, hands-on approach, Bwe is deeply committed to fostering unity and engagement among communities. His tireless efforts to promote harmony and build vibrant, inclusive societies continue to resonate across multicultural landscapes.

Gabrielle Marchetti – Community Representative Commissioner

Current term: September 2023 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2023



Gabrielle is a dedicated advocate for multiculturalism and the rights of diverse communities in Victoria. She was born in Italy and migrated to Australia with her family. Her passion for social justice, particularly regarding workers' rights, led her to pursue a career as a community lawyer in a not-for-profit community legal centre.

In this role, she supported and protected the employment rights of vulnerable workers, especially those most disadvantaged, including temporary visa holders and other migrant workers.

Gabrielle currently serves on the board of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. She is the Vice President of the Committee of Italians Abroad in Victoria and Tasmania (COMITES Victoria and Tasmania) and an Honorary Fellow of the Melbourne Law School.

Gabrielle was a board member of the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health for four years. She was involved in a grassroots campaign to establish Melbourne's first Italian bilingual primary school.

As a Victorian Multicultural Commissioner, Gabrielle welcomes the opportunity to champion the rights and needs of multicultural and multifaith communities across the state: to promote the full participation of these communities in social, cultural, economic and political life; to advocate for equal access to Victorian services.

Krushnadevsinh Ravalji – Youth Commissioner

Current term: September 2023 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2023



Krushnadevsinh (Kano) Ravalji, is an award-winning advocate, speaker, and founder of Third Culture Australia. As a migrant, he faced language, cultural and racial challenges, which motivated him to volunteer and work within the multicultural and youth sectors.

Kano conducted research with Australian National University and UNICEF into systemic racism affecting young people. At the Victorian Electoral Commission, he produced more than 100 educational videos in 30 languages, empowering diverse communities in the democratic process.

In recognition of his dedication, Kano received the inaugural VicHealth Future ChangeMaker Award, supported by AHPA, and the RAMA Youth Icon Award in 2022. Today, he leads Third Culture Australia, supporting young people and partnering with organisations to promote inclusion, equity and leadership within multicultural communities.

Kano also contributes as a committee member to Young Gujjus of Victoria, Culture Spring and the Western Metropolitan Partnership. As Youth Commissioner, Kano aims to bring his lived and professional experience to support the diverse Victorian community.

Bill Papastergiadis OAM – Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Bill is a highly accomplished Australian construction lawyer and leads the Melbourne office of pre-eminent national law firm, Moray and Agnew.

Bill has a long history of involvement in multicultural affairs, gained through his role as Director of the Hellenic Initiative and his elected position as President of the Greek Community of Melbourne and Victoria, which he has held since 2008. In this role, Bill has devoted himself to the promotion and welfare of Victoria's Greek community.

Bill is passionate about community work. He is involved in many multicultural programs, including roles such as Chairman of South Melbourne Football Club, former Chair and longstanding board member of Alphington Grammar School, and board member of Melbourne University's Humanities Foundation.

In 2019, Bill was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to the Greek Community.

Jennifer Huppert – Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Jennifer is a lawyer with over 30 years' experience, practising largely in the area of government and commercial property law, and is currently a special counsel at Maddocks Lawyers. She has a long history of involvement in multicultural affairs and public service in Victoria. Jennifer was a member of the board of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission from 2016 until 2021, a member of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria representing the Southern Metropolitan Region during 2009 and 2010, and prior to that was a director of the Emergency Services State Superannuation Fund.

Jennifer was the President of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) from 2014 to 2020 and has served on the boards of a number of not-for-profit organisations, including the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Ltd, the B'nei B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission, the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence, and Youth Connect. Jennifer is currently a councillor of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts from Monash University, and a Master of Urban Planning from the University of Melbourne.

Dr Judy Tang – Commissioner

Current term: September 2023 - September 2027

First appointed: September 2019



Judy is a strong advocate for diversity (multiculturalism, LGBTIQ+, ageing, neurodiversity) and mental health. She has expertise in psychology, research and community engagement. With extensive relationships across government and community, Judy has volunteered for more than 15 years to promote and advocate for multiculturalism and equality for migrants.

Judy is a former VMC Multicultural Champion and President of the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council, a national body that advocates for the rights of multicultural and multifaith LGBTIQ+ people and communities. Judy is currently a Board Director at the Victorian Pride Centre, has a doctorate in neuropsychology and is a practising clinical neuropsychologist at Invictus Health.

Dr Mohamed Mohideen OAM JP – Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Mohamed is a microbiologist by profession with more than 30 years' experience in the field. He is a professional member of the Australian Society for Microbiology, and he was an academic in Monash University's Department of Microbiology for over 20 years.

Mohamed works as the Senior multifaith/multicultural Coordinator for Coroner Court of Victoria (CCoV) and is also the Co-Chair of the CCoV Multifaith Advisory Committee. He is also the Head of Priority Communities and Engagement, COVID-19 Vaccination Response at the Department of Health.

Mohamed has over 25 years' experience working with Multifaith and multicultural communities and working with community to address human rights, justice, mental health, refugee rights, environmental issues and climate change and the interaction between multicultural and Indigenous communities. He is a strong advocate against family violence and was appointed a White Ribbon Ambassador in 2016. He is inclusive and collaborative and has an ability to draw upon a range of leadership styles and approaches which are primarily strengths-based and transformational and ability to generate enthusiasm and commitment across stakeholder groups. Mohamed also has great leadership ability to communicate a vision that promotes intercultural and interfaith dialogue with ultimate commitment to achieving social cohesion and equality for all Victorians.

He is on the Inaugural Community Advisory Board of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity. He is the Vice President of the Islamic Council of Victoria and its immediate Past President. Mohamed is Deputy Chair of the Faith Communities Council of Victoria. He is also a member of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC). He is the former Chairperson of the Monash Interfaith Gathering and is a member of Monash City Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee, and former President of the United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia. He was also the Acting President of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association.

Mohamed was awarded the 2015 Sir John Monash Multicultural Champion and 2018 Sir John Monash Volunteer of the Year by Monash City Council. He received the 2016 Victorian Premier's Volunteer Champion Award for Leadership. In 2013, he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal.

Silvia Renda – Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Silvia is a passionate advocate for multiculturalism and for bringing communities together through meaningful engagement.

A community leader for over 25 years, she draws on professional skills and lived experience as a migrant to support Portuguese-speaking communities.

Silvia founded the Portuguese Speaking Communities of Victoria and was its President for seven years.

In 2018, she founded, and currently chairs, the Portuguese Australian Women's Association, which builds a network of support for Portuguese-speaking women and advocates for women's leadership.

Silvia is a member of the Portuguese Community Council, a global body of elected representatives that advises the Portuguese government on issues facing expatriated communities.

As Chief Advisor and Head of Government Relations at the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, Silvia draws on her experience in conflict resolution, strategy and policy, and on her record of work with government, international consulates, boards and senior executives.

Nyangak (Lizzy) Kuoth – Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Whimsical, wise and courageous, Lizzy is a young woman who has already lived a full life.

As a child, Lizzy fled war-torn South Sudan with her grandmother and three younger brothers, spending four years in Egypt before arriving in Melbourne in 2005.

Today, Lizzy is carving out her own niche at the intersection of economics, youth development, diversity and inclusion. As a Commissioner, Lizzy brings an important voice, cross-cultural wisdom and powerful stories to inspire others. When she isn't at work, Lizzy is either out for a hike or grabbing a coffee with a mate.

Sylvia Coombe – Commissioner

Current term: September 2023 - September 2027

First appointed: September 2023



Sylvia Coombe is the President of the Fijian Community Association Victoria Inc. and the Vice-President of the United Pasifika Council of Victoria Inc.

With more than 17 years of experience in quality management, assurance and rail safety in the Victorian public rail transportation industry, Sylvia has made significant contributions to ensuring the highest standards of quality and safety for passengers and employees.

In addition to her current professional role in the construction industry, Sylvia actively volunteers and supports various state, federal, local boards and organisations. She volunteers on peak bodies, advisory bodies, local councils, research bodies and consultation committees for the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme workers in Victoria. This scheme strengthens relationships between Australia and Pacific Island countries including Timor Leste.

Sylvia currently volunteers at her local CFA fire brigade as a non-operational firefighter (support), and is a multicultural safety ambassador with the Migrant Worker Centre. These roles demonstrate her dedication to public safety, supporting local communities, and protecting the rights and safety of migrant workers.

When combined, these skills and experience demonstrate Sylvia's commitment to the welfare of others and her passion for making a positive impact across society.

Tarang Chawla – Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 - September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Tarang is an Indian-born Australian writer, lawyer, campaigner and activist. He is the co-founder of Not One More Niki, one of Australia's largest campaigns to end violence against women and children, named in honour of his younger sister Nikita who was murdered in 2015.

A sessional academic at Monash University and on the Board of the Australian Republic Movement, Tarang's work has appeared across Australian television, print and online media outlets and internationally on the BBC, Times of India and Hindustan Times.

Tarang has received multiple honours for his work, including Young Australian of the Year Finalist, Young Community Achiever of the Year, one of the Top 25 Most Influential People Working for Social Change and one of Australia's Top 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians.

In memoriam

Vale Stefan Romaniw OAM

The VMC honours Stefan Romaniw OAM, who passed away on 26 June 2024.

A decent, compassionate and altruistic person, Stefan devoted himself to the community, placing a high value on participation, inclusion and family.

Proud of his Ukrainian heritage, language, culture and traditions, Stefan advocated widely and well for a more inclusive, vibrant and prosperous Australia, as well as for a free Ukraine.



Image sourced by Community Languages Australia

Stefan served in so many ways:

- as Chairperson of the VMC between 1997 and 2001
- as Chair of Multicultural Arts Victoria
- as Chairperson of the Victorian Government's Australia Day Committee (Victoria)
- as Executive Director of Community Languages Australia, promoting the importance of language maintenance and securing much-needed resources for language schools across the nation (for which he was recognised with an Order of Australia in 2001)
- in state, national and international leadership roles within the Ukrainian diaspora, including as First Vice President of the Ukrainian World Congress
- as Co-Chair of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations
- as principal of the Ukrainian Community School in North Melbourne for 17 years
- as Chair of the Ukrainian School Council of Victoria and President of the Association of Ukrainians of Victoria for 10 years.

In 2013, Stefan was inducted into the St Bernard's College Hall of Fame.

In July 2024, the Victorian Government held a state funeral in honour of Stefan's life and service to the community.

Vale Stefan, you are deeply missed.

Strategic priorities and focus areas

The Commission's priorities are set out in a Statement of Expectations, issued by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

In 2023-24, these priority areas were:

- **Supporting government priorities**
- **Promotion of cultural diversity**
- **Advocacy to government**
- **Community engagement**

Supporting government priorities

The Commission supports government priorities through representation at Ministerial advisory committees, inter-departmental committees, working groups and department-to-department liaison on specific policy areas. These policy areas include family violence, mental health and anti-vilification reforms.

The Commission promotes and shares crucial information about government programs and initiatives – and facilitates community involvement, ensuring community voices are heard and represented across various government areas. To effectively support government priorities, the Commission collaborates with government departments and agencies to:

- inform communities about the programs and services we provide
- share information and seek input from our networks and consultative bodies, such as Regional Advisory Councils, the Multifaith Advisory Group and other VMC networks built over the past 40 years
- ensure the government prioritises the needs of Victoria's multicultural communities, when it designs and delivers services
- provide input and advice for departmental or whole-of-government submissions
- improve outcomes for multicultural small businesses, particularly in regional and rural areas

- disseminate time-critical messages and opportunities from government initiatives and programs.

In 2023-24, the Commission:

- supported the priority areas of prevention of family violence with Family Safety Victoria
- participated in working groups, such as the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Mental Health
- worked with the Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre on targeted engagement and developing a pilot training program
- supported work to shape the government's Anti-Racism Strategy
- supported multicultural businesses, including small businesses in regional Victoria
- participated in the roll-out of the Community Pharmacist Statewide Pilot, improving access for women to much needed services.

Promotion of cultural diversity

The Commission is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the benefits of cultural and religious diversity. We aim to strengthen multiculturalism, advocate broadly for anti-racism initiatives, and support targets in key policy areas.

In 2023-24, our work included:

- delivering Cultural Diversity Week: A flagship program of community engagement and activities
- showcasing community contributions: Through programs such as the Multicultural Awards for Excellence, the Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll, and the Multicultural Film Festival.

Cultural Diversity Week 2024

Every year in March, the Commission brings Victorians together during Cultural Diversity Week to celebrate and recognise the benefits of our diversity and to showcase the many cultures that have shaped Victoria's identity. The event is linked to the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March.

In 2024, Cultural Diversity Week took place from 18-24 March and featured a week-long online campaign, based around the theme: *Our shared stories – celebrating together*. The event – supported by a VMC-curated teachers' toolkit, stakeholder pack and online digital assets – invited all Victorians to share their unique stories and experiences.

The launch event included a video conference facilitated by four VMC Commissioners, who answered questions about what cultural diversity means to them and the significance of the United Nations Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Our social media platforms, too, generated widespread interest in the week-long celebration: more than 19,000 people interacted with our related newsfeed; and more than 36,000 people engaged with related VMC content via viewing, sharing, forwarding and liking.

VMC Awards for Excellence and the Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll



The Multicultural Awards for Excellence formally recognise the outstanding people and organisations who make Victoria a more inclusive and welcoming place for multicultural communities.

The 2023 awards ceremony included the Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll, which celebrates local champions of diversity. The Honour Roll recognises the vital role these people play to keep our communities safe and connected.

More than 400 people attended the ceremony in December 2023 at Government House, hosted by the Governor, The Honourable Margaret Gardner AC.

The awards recognised 65 Victorians and organisations across more than 15 categories for strengthening multiculturalism through professional and volunteer service.

The Commission thanks the Commonwealth Bank, SBS, LanguageLoop, Foot Solutions and Segmento for partnering with us for the Multicultural Awards for Excellence and the Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll.

Multicultural Film Festival



The Commission presented its annual Multicultural Film Festival in partnership with Swinburne University. The festival – which showcases cultural diversity through short films, attracting both emerging and established filmmakers – aims to increase diverse screen representation, while creating authentic connections between the audience and filmmakers.

In 2023, the festival received 145 submissions covering a wide range of issues and themes – from migration and settlement journeys to inter-generational and intercultural experiences.

Out of all submissions, 19 films were chosen as the MFF Official Selection. From these, six films received awards, and two received honorable mentions. The films premiered at a public screening at ACMI, followed by additional screenings at Federation Square, via SBS On Demand, on the Commission's YouTube channel, and during a City of Casey online screening event in November 2023.

The Commission thanks the Commonwealth Bank, SBS, Jobs Victoria, Segmento, the Victorian Electoral Commission and the Department of Transport and Planning for partnering with us for the Multicultural Film Festival.

Advocacy to government

In 2023-24, the Commission's advocacy efforts were multifaceted and impactful. These included:

- submissions to government inquiries and reviews
- representation on more than 30 inter-departmental committees, task forces and government working groups
- publication of a research report examining the impact of the Commission over 40 years
- connecting community organisations and service providers directly to government departments and agencies, promoting systemic change and maximising opportunities for the co-design of policies and programs
- supporting Victorians through challenging events by connecting communities to emergency response efforts during storms, floods and fires in 2023-24.

The Commission also contributed to government and independent reviews and inquiries, offering deep knowledge, evidence-based feedback and intelligence gathered from a range of sources. These sources include:

- Eight Regional Advisory Councils
- The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN)
- The Multicultural Business Network (formerly, Multicultural Chamber of Commerce Group)
- The Multifaith Advisory Group
- Multiple roundtable engagements and consultations (online and in-person) on community-specific or place-based issues.

Submissions and Input

In 2023-24, the Commission either submitted or provided input into departmental or whole-of-government submissions. These included:

- the Victorian Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Capturing Data on Family Violence Perpetrators in Victoria
- the Australian government Multicultural Framework Review
- the Victorian Government Multicultural Affairs Outcomes Framework
- the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry on civics education, engagement and participation in Australia
- the Inquiry into Civics Education, Engagement and Participation in Australia
- the Humanitarian Program 2024-25.

Strategic reports and advocacy advice

The Commission provided advocacy advice and intelligence to the following strategic reports:

- The Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Diversity data collection review for communities at risk of vulnerability, discrimination or profiling
- Race discrimination in the workplace guidelines by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Research on the feasibility of community-led reporting mechanisms as an additional avenue to report vilification and hate crimes to relevant authorities in Victoria by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Family violence reform rolling action plan 2024-26 by Family Safety Victoria
- Health information sharing privacy management framework by the Department of Health
- Intersectionality report: gender and culturally and racially marginalised employees by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector
- Expanding and improving the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme
- MYN Settlement Support for Youth Initiative.

Additional advocacy efforts

Other significant advocacy efforts in 2023-24 included:

- data collection barriers for multicultural communities, to better understand risks associated with discrimination and racial profiling
- barriers in reporting discrimination and racism in current Victorian reporting systems
- emerging issues related to social cohesion and harmony
- best practice approaches to family violence reforms
- improving the design and delivery of multicultural programs and services
- systems and structural change to ensure that programs and services are more equitable, accessible and inclusive.

Collaborative efforts

To strengthen communities, improve services and promote social cohesion in 2023-24, the Commission worked collaboratively with a range of partners, including:

- Coroners Court of Victoria
- Courts Services Victoria
- Department of Education
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Health
- Department of Home Affairs (Australian Government), particularly in relation to the Multicultural Framework Review
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- Family Safety Victoria
- Victoria Police
- Victorian Electoral Commission
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Victorian Public Sector Commission
- Victorian Small Business Commission

Participation on Committees and Task Forces

In 2023-24, the Commission also participated in numerous inter-departmental committees, task forces and roundtables, such as:

- Coroners Court of Victoria Multifaith/Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Courts Services Victoria Human Rights Reference Committee
- Department of Education Best Start, Best Life Taskforce Ministerial Advisory Group
- Department of Education Multicultural Learning Partnership
- Department of Health and Murdoch Children's Research Institute Generation V Strategic Partnerships Advisory Committee
- Department of Health CALD Health Advisory Group
- Department of Health Community Pharmacist Statewide Pilot Advisory Group
- Department of Health Diverse Communities Working Group
- Department of Home Affairs Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group
- Department of Justice and Community Safety South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Multicultural Mental Health Network
- Family Safety Victoria Multicultural Communities Family Violence Working Group
- Family Safety Victoria Working Together Advisory Group
- Mental Health Ministerial Advisory Committee
- City of Moonee Valley Multilingual Reference Group
- Victoria Police Chief Commissioner's Human Rights Strategic Advisory Committee
- Victoria Police Multicultural Portfolio Reference Group
- Victorian Disability Advisory Council
- Victorian Electoral Commission CALD Advisory Group
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Council of Victorian Quarterly Meetings
- Victorian Government Anti-Racism Taskforce

Community engagement

In 2023-24, the Commission made significant strides in strengthening its formal engagement channels and acting as a mediator during times of disharmony. This included work through the Regional Advisory Councils, Multifaith Advisory Group, Multicultural Youth Network, and Multicultural Business Network. These initiatives were crucial in ensuring that Victoria's diverse multicultural and faith communities were well-represented and their concerns addressed. In 2023-24, these commitments and activities included:

- 18 Regional Advisory Council meetings, attended by more than 220 members
- a regional conference
- supporting 37 Multifaith Advisory Group members
- supporting 20 Multicultural Youth Network members
- supporting almost 150 community leaders and representatives to undertake capacity leadership training
- providing mental health first aid training for Regional Advisory Council members
- six anti-racism and anti-vilification consultations in metro and regional Victoria, held in partnership with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- three community consultations on 'Strengthening Victoria's laws against hate speech or conduct'
- monthly consultations on improving the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme
- two in-language referendum information sessions
- information sessions on temporary protection visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas with the Department of Home Affairs
- regular communication to Victoria's communities and connections about opportunities, including government grant announcements.

Additional 2023-24 Commission engagement activities included:

- flagship events attended by a total of 2,320 people
- the 12 Commissioners attending 533 community events – strengthening social cohesion across the state
- multiple screenings of the 2023 Official Selection Multicultural Film Festival (MFF) award-winning films
- weekly community updates to more than 5,000 subscribers
- a week-long online campaign to promote Cultural Diversity Week
- engaging with 26,000 social media followers across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn
- more than 36,000 engagements with VMC online content, including viewing, sharing, forwarding and liking.



Regional Advisory Councils (RACs)

Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) serve as a vital link between multicultural communities and the Victorian Government. They provide advice about the things that matter to the community.

With representation from various professions and cultural backgrounds, RAC members offer valuable insights into issues such as mental health, family violence, employment, racism and housing.

Chaired by VMC Commissioners, the RACs meet three times a year to address and prioritise challenges.

These meetings are instrumental in helping the community identify potential solutions and strategies for to advocate for change. The insights gathered from these meetings have influenced government policy and legislative frameworks, ensuring that the needs of Victoria's diverse communities are considered in decision-making processes.

The Commission expresses its gratitude to the following organisations for hosting RAC meetings:

- AMES Australia
- Cultura
- M.A.T.E.S for Change.

Regional Advisory Forum

The Commission delivered a one-day Regional Advisory Forum in Melbourne, on 9 November 2023. The forum, which brought together RAC members from eight Victorian regions, aimed to share experiences, knowledge and community concerns with government representatives and the Commission.

The forum discussed mental health, family violence, employment and racism – issues identified and prioritised during RAC meetings from 2021 to 2023. All sessions were moderated by VMC Commissioners with RAC members as speakers. The event was an essential step in addressing these critical issues across the state.

Multi-Faith Advisory Group

The Multi-Faith Advisory Group (MAG) advises the Commission about issues affecting Victoria's diverse faith communities. The MAG is convened by the Commission and chaired by its Chairperson.

The MAG – comprising 34 senior representatives from Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i communities across the state – encourages meaningful connections between government and faith leaders. It fosters cultural inclusiveness and community-based solutions that align with its strengths-based, intersectional approach.

In October 2023, faith leaders came together for Peace, Prayers and Meditations at St Paul's Cathedral. The event articulated shared hopes for peace, amid turmoil affecting local and global communities.

Through prayers, silence and candlelight, representatives stood united in condemning anti-semitism, Islamophobia, racism and violence. The service provided solace to Jewish and Muslim Victorians experiencing grief and anxiety.

The MAG held two meetings in the Victorian Parliament, providing multifaith leaders with a platform to offer prayers, readings and meditations from their respective traditions. Faith leaders reaffirmed their commitment to peace, social cohesion and respectful coexistence. They unanimously condemned acts of violence and vilification.



Multicultural Youth Network

Established in 2007, the Multicultural Youth Network (MYN) advises the Commission and government departments on matters affecting multicultural young people. This includes multicultural affairs, mental health, employment, racism and discrimination.

Comprising 20 members from across Victoria, the MYN held five official meetings and three out-of-sessions meetings in 2023-24.

The MYN empowers young people from culturally diverse backgrounds in Victoria to participate in policy and government decision-making processes. Members promote diversity and inclusivity as their main goal – and contribute to key Commission priorities.

In 2023-24, members advocated for the implementation of multifaith prayer rooms in schools. This involved investigating the current landscape of structures, policies and frameworks supporting multifaith, public school prayer rooms.

MYN members then produced and presented a detailed research paper to senior representatives from the Department of Education, Office for Youth, and Monash University. The MYN is now developing a multifaith prayer room toolkit for schools.



Regional Advisory Forum 2023

Multicultural Communities Database

Lessons from the Victorian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as floods and other emergencies in recent years, have underscored the importance of partnering with local community leaders and trusted voices. These partnerships are crucial to:

- influence support behaviours in multicultural communities
- support effective dissemination of time-critical messages
- gain local insights and intelligence in the event of an outbreak or emergency.

To address these needs, the Commission developed a Multicultural Communities Database in 2023. Currently, the database houses a large registry of multicultural organisations and community leaders. It captures relevant demographic information, including cultural backgrounds, languages spoken, services provided and areas of expertise. This information is helping to strengthen engagement with diverse community groups and leaders across Victoria.

The database also provides multicultural organisations with news and information. This includes government or community resources, awards, grants, news and VMC-hosted events. It also helps the Commission to mobilise diverse communities during emergencies, by delivering critical messaging to all corners of the state.

The Commission maintains stringent data protections and a commitment to privacy protections and ethical usage.

[Register to join the database](#)

The Commission encourages organisations and community leaders to register and be a part of this crucial network, ensuring that their respective communities are well-represented and informed during times of need.

Interdepartmental engagements

The Commission provided advice to government departments and agencies on best practice engagement with multicultural communities through the:

- Victorian Electoral Commission
- Agricultural Victoria
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Scanlon Foundation
- Victoria Police
- Business Victoria

Partnerships

In 2023-24, the Commission partnered with:

- Department of Home Affairs to run information sessions on temporary protection visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas
- VEOHRC to run six community consultations, including in regional Victoria, on anti-racism and anti-vilification initiatives
- Department of Justice and Community Safety to run community consultations on strengthening Victoria's laws against hate speech.

The Commission also met regularly with the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria to support ongoing collaboration and advocacy efforts.

Regional Advisory Council members

Ms Arfa Sarfaraz Khan, RAC Member, Gippsland Region, United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley Recipient of Multicultural Honour Roll 2023



As a proud member of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC), I am honoured to represent and advocate for our vibrant community in Gippsland. This platform provides me with the opportunity to engage with stakeholders, community leaders and representatives to discuss and address the concerns, issues and challenges faced by multicultural communities.

Through collective efforts, we can work towards enriching the lives of these communities and shaping a brighter future. I feel privileged to be a part of this enriching work, contributing to the betterment of our multicultural communities, and helping to create a more inclusive and harmonious society for all.

I firmly believe that local representatives are uniquely positioned to understand the intricacies of our multicultural communities' needs. They possess invaluable insight into the local landscape and can pinpoint areas where support is most crucial. As a member of the RAC, I appreciate that this platform empowers us to share vital information with the change-makers and influencers within our community. By bridging this gap, we can collaboratively drive meaningful change, address pressing issues, and foster a more inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes social cohesion.

Mr Andy Tran, RAC Member, Southern Metro Region. Secretary, Springvale Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association Co- Vice-President, Vietnamese Australian Professional Network Member, Rotary Noble Park Dingley Volunteer, Vietnamese Museum Australia



As a member of the RAC, I've witnessed first-hand the profound impact our engagement has on supporting refugees and the multicultural community here in Victoria. Through collaborative efforts and shared ideas, we strive to create a more welcoming environment, assisting refugees and migrants as they rebuild their lives.

Being part of RAC enables me to connect with leaders, mentors and professionals who share a passion for community and multicultural advocacy. These connections foster collaboration and amplify our collective voice, advocating for the needs of refugees and multicultural communities at all levels of government.

I am proud to serve as member of the VMC's RACs and to stand as an advocate for refugees in Victoria. It is a privilege to be able to contribute to their journey towards a brighter and more hopeful future. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the VMC for providing this opportunity to serve and make a meaningful difference in the lives of refugees in our community.

Ms June Anderson, RAC Member, Eastern Metro Region. President, Australia Asian Business Women's Association



It has been an absolute honour to serve as the VMC's RAC member for Eastern Metro since 2019. As a RAC member, I serve as a representative of diverse multicultural communities at the grassroots level, advocating for community issues, challenges and identifying service gaps.

Through the RAC, the VMC encourages deeper involvement and facilitates feedback to government departments, amplifying our grassroots voice. VMC provides platforms and opportunities through discussion groups and open forums where we exchange knowledge, celebrate cultural diversity, and strengthen common community bonds. VMC's community-focused programs, including mental health first aid training, have equipped me to better serve community mental health and wellbeing.

My journey began 12 years ago when I founded the Australia Asian Business Women's Association to empower Asian migrant women through leadership education and community contribution. During the pandemic, especially, I focused on supporting Asian migrant women in my community who experience family violence and racism, recognising the prevalence and consequences of these issues.

I am proud of my involvement with VMC RAC. It has provided leadership opportunities and fostered community cohesion. I am deeply grateful for the chance to contribute positively to the community through the VMC.

Fabiola Campbell, RAC Member, North West Metro Region. Founder, CEO of Professional Migrant Women



As a proud member of both the North West Metro Regional RAC and Professional Migrant Women (PMW), I have actively participated in initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion, visibility and representation of migrant women in our communities. As a RAC member, I have spent three years advocating for the social integration of refugee and migrant communities, particularly professional women.

It was an honour to lead the North West Metro RAC at the inaugural Regional Advisory Forum in November 2023. The forum brought together RAC members from all eight regions across Victoria to deal directly with government and the VMC on challenges and issues facing multicultural communities.

Through my involvement in various forums and community engagements, I have liaised with key stakeholders to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups. These experiences have enriched me personally and enabled me to bridge the gap between organisations and our diverse, multicultural communities.

I am proud of the important work we accomplish together at the RAC, and I remain dedicated to continuing this meaningful endeavour. I look forward to further contributing to advancing our multicultural community.

Neha Samar, RAC Member, Hume Region. Founder and Executive Director, The Flamingo Project Deputy Chair, Goulburn Murray Local Learning and Employment Network Board of Directors, Greater Shepparton Foundation



Engaging with the VMC Hume Region RAC has been transformative for me. It is more than just participating; it is about being part of a family where every idea, and every effort, contributes to the heartbeat of community development in Victoria. Through RAC, I've found not just a platform, but a community of like-minded people dedicated to making a difference.

Together, we've woven a tapestry of support, collaboration and advocacy that resonates deeply with me. The connections forged within Hume RAC, from mentors to fellow advocates, have enriched my journey beyond measure. As a RAC member, I've embraced the honour and responsibility of amplifying the voices of our multicultural communities.

Thank you, VMC, for entrusting me with this opportunity to serve. It is a privilege I hold close to my heart. I'm committed to continuing our shared mission of fostering inclusivity, unity and empowerment in Victoria.

Yai Marach, RAC Member, Barwon South West Region. Democracy Ambassador, Victorian Electoral Commission Chairperson, Jieng Community



Joining the VMC RAC was an opportunity and a call to unite with like-minded members in our region. Together, we speak with one voice, advocating on the pressing issues faced by culturally diverse communities.

As a RAC member for Barwon South West, I am privileged to connect with professionals from various fields. This enriches my understanding and equips me with vital information that I can share with my community, empowering them in many ways.

With immense pride, I reflect on my journey as a RAC member for VMC, a role I undertook during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The information sessions I attended, on community safety and vaccination requirements – material I then shared with my community – were a testament to the dedication of the VMC Commissioners.

I am genuinely grateful to have been a part of this journey, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Jieng Community, VMC Commissioners and everyone who has supported me

Abhishek Awasthi, RAC Member, Loddon Mallee Region President, Indian Association of Bendigo Recipient of Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2015, Ambassador Award and Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2019 and Award for Meritorious Service to the Community



I am committed to multiculturalism and have been a member of the Loddon Mallee RAC since 2017.

As a proud Australian of Indian descent and a practising Hindu, RAC has allowed me to promote and celebrate the social, cultural and economic benefits of diversity. Through RAC, I have encouraged multicultural communities to build new lives in regional Victoria, express their cultural inheritance and be proud of it.

The Indian community is the largest multicultural community in the region. It is now an inclusive and welcoming place for all. As a member of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Interim Regional Body (Department of Health), I advocate also for responsive and integrated mental health services for multicultural communities.

In these ways, RAC plays a critical role in building a positive and progressive future – and I thank the VMC for supporting the RACs.

John Millington OAM, RAC Member, Grampians Region. Board, Director West Wimmera Health Service, Board Director Rotary Club of Nhill, Director Nhill Community Garden



It has been an honour and a privilege to have served on the Grampians RAC for the past seven years. During this time, I have represented the multicultural community in the Wimmera region of Western Victoria. The Karen refugees from Myanmar (Burma) were invited to come to Nhill in 2010 to join a local company Luv A Duck Pty Ltd, where I was General Manager. Their settlement has been hugely successful and has paved the way for other ethnic communities to come to our town and the wider region.

It has been extremely important through the RAC to give a voice to those who are voiceless. The RAC has been the conduit for the Commission to hear the concerns and challenges of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities and, ultimately, to address those concerns in a timely and effective manner.

I thank the VMC for giving me the opportunity to represent the views and concerns of our multicultural community, and to see action and response.

I am hopeful that the Australian Government will move to grant citizenship to those who seek their ultimate settlement goal, consistent with representations from the VMC and the RACs.

In concluding, may I quote some ancient wisdom: The first generation of migrants plants the seeds. The second generation enjoys the shade. The third generation enjoys the fruit.

I am enjoying the shade, as both my parents were first generation migrants.

Our sponsors

The Commission cannot achieve its goals and objectives, nor deliver its calendar of programs and events, without the great support of our partners and sponsors.

We work with our partners and sponsors in a spirit of genuine collaboration and exchange. A relationship with the Commission helps a partner organisation to:

- build brand awareness
- build networks, meaningful connections and client relationships
- build knowledge and understanding of multicultural communities
- support promotional campaigns
- send a strong message of support to multicultural communities

The Commission thanks its 2023-24 sponsors and partners.

Supporting partners



Major partners



Program Sponsors



Department of Transport and Planning

Media partner



Multicultural Film Festival 2023



Appendix 1: Regional Advisory Council members

The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* provides for eight Regional Advisory Councils (RAC) to advise the Commission on matters relating to the objectives and functions of the Victorian Multicultural Commission. RAC members are volunteers from metropolitan and regional Victoria. They are appointed on a two-year basis, via a public expression of interest.

The lists below include RAC members for 2023-24. Those members whose term concluded in December 2023 are marked with an asterisk (*). We express our appreciation to these outgoing RAC members and thank them for their contributions over their two-year tenures.

New RAC members were appointed in December 2023 for the 2023-25 term.

Barwon South West Region

Chair: Commissioner Dr Judy Tang

Members:

- Carly Ann Jordan
- Casey O'Brien*
- Cecilia Lynn Vence
- Catherine Jonathan
- Danielle Parker
- Dhiraj Neupane
- Faiza Kakay Zai Asif
- Fiona Greig
- Gyanendra Upreti
- Joy Leggo*
- Josy Kadavil Thomas
- Lena Talihmanidis*
- Matin Ghayour Minaie
- Navin Nayak
- Niraj Karanjeet
- Pirooz Jafari*
- Sameera Aduru
- Santosh Raj Pandey*
- Syed Abidi
- Usbi Taujale*
- Wei-Lin Mai
- Yai Marach Yai

Grampians Region

Chair: Commissioner Silvia Renda

Members:

- Betty Mathew
- Cephas Lem Baguot
- Cecilia Lynn Vence*
- Elangovan Shanmugam*
- Frances Salenga*
- Gersen Moreno*
- Harisankar Parippaayillam
- Hee Young Lim
- Irumva Apollinaire
- John Millington
- Jessica Trijsburg*
- Karissa Cribbes*
- Laiba Maqbool
- Lateef Olufunlayo Adeleye
- Meeta Narsi
- Monsour Obadina*
- Parminder Kaur Gugal*
- Petrina Nani
- Sachin Dahiya
- Wendy Bywaters

Loddon Mallee Region

Chair: Nyangak (Lizzy) Kuoth

Members:

- Abhishek Awasthi
- Ajaykumar Shambhunath Mishra
- Akesa Kei
- Andrea Wolf*
- Apolosi Ranawai Lasei
- Ernest Antoine
- Garima Solanki
- Ginny Tan*
- Joelle Brown*
- Kate Steenvoorden*
- Linto George Thomas
- Luz Restrepo*
- Manorama Shah
- Miriam Casas*
- Posao (Nido) Taveesupmai*
- Rosita Vincent
- Shanakra Gangadhar Hgadi
- Shingirai Nyabonda
- Shivali Chatley*
- Sonia Di Mezza*
- Sudheeb Sahadevan
- Tracey Maree Moss

Hume Region

Chair: Commissioner Sylvia Coombe

Members:

- Adnan Ahmad
- Ali Al Battaat*
- Ali Reza Alizadah
- Bhakti Mainali Dhamala
- Bishal Jung Kunwar
- Emilly Lauren Bond
- Emmanuel Katenda*
- Fauzia Islam
- Haroun Kafi*
- Judgebir Singh
- Leigh Johnson
- Lorna Gillespie
- Mariola Nebiu
- Meena Malla
- Naynika Bagrecha
- Neha Samar
- Nudrat Ara Israr
- Rabia Ali*
- Richard Ogesare Ogetii
- Sabine Smyth
- Sam Atukorala
- Sanobar Allaqaband
- Sarmed Alasadi*
- Seema Abdullah
- Ugur Avci*
- Varun Joshi

Gippsland Region

Chair: Commissioner Dr Mohammed Mohideen

OAM JP

Members:

- Arfa Sarfaraz Khan
- Christine Leng Huat Lee
- Derya Deniz Demiroglu
- J. Murray Lobley*
- Julia Rovey de Souza
- Oluremi Yusuf
- Rebecca Christine Hutchinson
- Sally Margaret Gafa
- Syed Hasan Tanveer
- Syeda Amatullah Husaini
- Wombat David Colin Lyons
- Yingxue Wang
- Yumna Ahmed

North West Metropolitan Region

Chair: Commissioner Tarang Chawla

Members:

- Agape Roxanne Sarthou
- Andi Xu
- Anasina Gray-Barberio
- Antoun Issa

- Ashima Soni
- Asmita Mahire-Singh
- Aurora Tang
- Bharat Palta
- Boudene Howard Hauraki
- Dolly Muriel Cutinho
- Emmanuela Amos
- Essan Dileri
- Eyayaw Ereta Zage
- Farah Warsame
- Gandhi Prasad Bhattarai
- Gaurav Chanana
- Godefa Berhane G'her
- Hasan Naim
- Jagdish Chander
- Jamuna Parajuli
- Jason Cordi
- Karna Rana
- Kul Acharya
- Mazin Kalakvan
- Meera D'Silva
- Monica Majak
- Mukhles Habash
- Nicolas Ojeda Amador
- Orlando Gibson
- Paul Orfanos
- Pelontle Patience Rabai
- Poonam Arora
- Provisia Joy Villalino
- Rahaf Adel Al Maalouf
- Rajat Chopra
- Raju Vemula
- Ravi Sivaram
- Rebecca Christine Hutchinson*
- Rhea Verma
- Robert Peter Gruhn
- Roslina Maharjan
- Ruhee Meghani
- Ruchika Rawat
- Sabiha Fatima
- Sally Saily Acraman Vuli
- Shanthi Priya Antony
- Suzan Makhoul
- Syed Ali Hyder Hussaini
- Taulogomai Gray
- Tehani Nishika Paiva
- Thao Thi Phuong Tran
- Thu Thuy Thi Nguyen
- Tila Guragai
- Tony Fretton
- Tshering Samdrup
- Vedran Drakulic
- Yasseen Musa
- Yelda Arman
- Yuen Man (Tiffany) Tang
- Zoraida Alexandra Salazar Paez

- Amrita Gurung
- Angelos Terrence Kenos
- Aradhna Sharma
- Brwa Abdulkarim Mohamed
- Dalal Samaan
- Dalal Sleiman
- Donny Doughty
- Fabiola Campbell-Fraser
- Florence Macusi Dato
- Gary Lee
- Geetanjali Gaba
- Hang Thi Thuy Nguyen
- Ivan Chan*
- James Bae
- Jasleen Kaur
- Jenny Katis
- Karolina Salanoa
- Liaqat Ahmadi*
- Linda Liwewe
- Loudeen Moetunai Fualautoalasi-Lam
- Mahadi Reshid*
- Margaret Giudice
- Marleine Raffoul*
- Molina Asthana
- Mohammad Nurul Islam Khan*
- Monica Raizada*
- Nelson Pervaz*
- Nayana Bhandari*
- Niru Tripathi*
- Nolwazi Dladla*
- Nusrat Islam*
- Paul Seidl*
- Ponniah Anandajayasekeram*
- Puneet Gulati*
- Ram Parsad Gurung*
- Rishi Bhattarai*
- Robiel Abraham*
- Roomanna Abdulrahman*
- Sahana Ramesh*
- Sanjay Sethi
- Sean Ryan*
- Shyama Sasidharan*
- Simon Ho*
- Smiley Sandhu*
- Sumit Kane*
- Sunil Abbott*
- Tahira Sheikh*
- Tara Gaire*
- Tarekegn Chimdi*
- Teresa De Fazio*
- Tianyue Sun*
- Tin Nguyen*
- Upul Hetti Kankanamge*
- Varsha Devi Balakrishnan*
- Wael Abuelmagd*

- Andy Chan*
- Ananya Chandel*
- Anoushka Jeronimus*
- Ayesha Ali*
- Baker Dawas*
- Beng Hean Loh*
- Bir Bharti*
- Carlisle Richardson*
- Charmaine Hunzwi*
- Deepak Pooja Punjabi*
- Deng Malith*
- Denis Kinkufi Kayenge*
- Dhanushan (Dhanu) Giritharan*
- Emmanuel Kinara*
- Eylul Top*
- Gurdev Singh Rattan*
- Hang Nguyen*
- Iqbal Hossain*

Southern Metropolitan Region

Chair: Commissioner Jennifer Huppert

Members:

- Adwin Town
- Ali Al Lawati
- Ali Yaghobi
- Andy Tran
- Arshjot Kaur Ramana
- Bismi Mohamed Ismail
- Chris Mallika Bhadra
- Claudio Cardamone
- Devendra Singh
- Fahim Ahmed Farooq
- Farhat Sameer Shaikh
- Gopal Harishchandra Ganwani
- Huiting Wei
- Jackie King
- Janice Gail Iloni
- Karen Vergara
- Kulendrasinga Sivasuthan
- Lina Orozco Munera
- Manir Uz Zaman
- Mary Ann Xavier
- Michael Constantine Zervos
- Nasir Ahmad Ahmadi
- Phillip James Start
- Rahmatullah Hussaini
- Sai Divya Pasupuleti
- Samantha-Jane Potter
- Simon Ho
- Sivanthi Gurumurothy
- Sukhvinder Singh Duggal
- Vinh-Quang Luong
- Yakindra Prasad Timilsena
- Yan Ma

- Alexander (Alex) Kats*
- Angela Di Stella*
- Aruna Hewagama
- Bassir Qadiri*
- Brijal Parikh*
- Cecilia Mphande
- Daizy Maan*
- Deborah Wiener*
- Deepa Mani*
- Erdinc Ozyurek*
- George Wan*
- Grissel Walmaggia*
- Hafiz Mayar*
- Ishita Mammen*
- Jackie Blake*
- Jamel Singh*
- James Seow
- Jeswynn Yogaratnam*
- John Zeleznikow*
- Josephine Khoshaba
- Khaled Taher*
- Lan Diep*
- Marina Savron*
- Mata Tuerei Mani
- Nada El-Masri*
- Ngatuaine Hosking*
- Paul Fulton Saluni
- Rakesh Auplish*
- Solange Ardiles*
- Sylvia Coombe*
- Theresa Sengaaga Ssali
- Virosch Perera*
- Weda Mohseni*
- Workineh Alamo*
- Zahra Haydar Big*
- Imptiaz Mohamed*
- Jian Min Li
- Jun Dong Anderson
- Ling Sun
- Linda Teng
- Mahera Amber Haque
- Ming Kiat Danny Ong
- Mohsen Afkari
- Namgay Wangchuk
- Nadesan Sundarsen*
- Noha Aly
- Oluwatoyin Jummy*
- Odia Ukoko
- Parameswaran Arputhanathan
- Philip Hwa Nam Tan
- Qiuqing Pu*
- Raju Adhikari
- Roger Mingjie Li*
- Rufina Chan
- Saleha Singh
- Sabaratnam Sundaramoorthy
- Sedi Smith Laumanu Puamau
- Siva Sivagnanam*
- Sawm Suante*
- Stephane Shepherd*
- Vahideh Eisaei*
- Vijaya Lakshmi Tangirala
- Vijaya Lakshmi Tangirala*
- Wilfred Yang Wang
- Xiaoyi Wang
- Yuqing Feng
- Vikrant Kishore*

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Chair: Commissioner Bill Papastergiadis OAM

Members:

- Adnan Hafeez
- Adolph Yang*
- Afrooz Rahimian
- Amit Rameshchandra Patel
- Anuradha Krishnan*
- Bernadette Anne Khoury (Chahwan)
- Deepak Joshi
- Donna Askew*
- Ebrahim Shayan*
- Ensieh Anjedani*
- Fairley Anthony Wijesinghe
- Fathima Saarah Ozeer
- Farhang Parvizian
- Farkhanda Shaheen Butt
- Hong Kin (Ken) Pang*

Appendix 2: Multifaith Advisory Group members

The Multifaith Advisory Group (MAG) was established in 2008 in response to recommendations from the 2007 Premier's Multifaith Leaders Forum.

The MAG is an advisory body that represents the voices of Victoria's faith leaders to the Victorian Government, through the Commission.

The aims of the MAG are to:

- ensure ongoing dialogue between the Victorian Government and Victoria's faith leaders and communities
- assist the government to understand and appropriately respond to situations that arise in diverse faith and multicultural communities around Victoria.

The MAG currently consists of approximately 36 senior representatives from Victoria's diverse faith communities including various Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i communities.

- All Nations Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Mulgrave
- AMAFHH Federation – Shi'a organisation
- Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture
- Australian Intercultural Society

- Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights
- Baha'i Community of Victoria
- Board of Imams Victoria
- Buddhist Council of Victoria
- Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
- Catholic Church of Australia
- Catholic Social Services Victoria
- Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)
- Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – Melbourne District
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – Northcote District
- Hindu Council of Australia (VIC)
- Hindu Society of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Jewish Community Council of Victoria
- Jumbunna Episcopate
- Lutheran Church of Australia, Victorian District
- National Council of Churches
- Presbyterian Church of Victoria
- Rabbinical Council of Victoria
- Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, Australian and New Zealand Diocese
- Salvation Army
- Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria
- The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne
- Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- Victorian Council of Churches



Appendix 3: 2023 Multicultural Youth Network members

In October 2022, the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) launched their Multicultural Youth Network (MYN) for the August 2022 to August 2024 term at Parliament House in Victoria.

A total of 20 young people, aged between 16 and 25 years, were selected to represent each of the eight regions of Victoria:

Barwon South West
Gippsland
Grampians
Hume
Loddon Mallee
Eastern Metropolitan
North and West Metropolitan
Southern Metropolitan

The MYN is a platform for members to advise the VMC and government departments on matters affecting multicultural young people including multicultural affairs, mental health, employment, racism and discrimination.

These voluntary roles present a unique opportunity to directly engage with the VMC, and assist in promoting the benefits of diversity and youth voice.

List of members:

- Aakriti Malhotra
- Aditi Karna
- Ahelee Rahman
- Albert Mumba
- Aleeza Hafeez
- Aristidis Tsoulakos
- Arya Banerjee
- Bradley Imalenowa
- Celil Kardaslar
- Christina Cushen
- Dinuki Rajapaksha Pathirannehelage
- Farzana Alam Eshita
- Hanienah Husna
- Khalid Muse
- Nathaniel Diong
- Numan Seyit
- Rosie Thyer
- Shirin Gul Amini
- Varun Joshi
- Zara Khan



Appendix 4: 2023 Multicultural Awards for Excellence and Multicultural Honour Roll

The Multicultural Awards for Excellence recognise people and organisations that foster cross-cultural understanding and support people from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to fully participate in the life of our state.

Multicultural Awards for Excellence Recipients

Arts

Nandita Chakraborty – Winner
The Social Studio – Highly Commended

Business

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd – Winner
All Ears Hearing – Highly Commended

Community Innovation

Wellsprings for Women – Winner
Theresa Sengaga Ssali – Highly Commended

Education

Early childhood education
City of Casey Best Start Cultural Communication Improvement Team – Winner
ViệtSpeak – Highly Commended

School education

River Nile School – Winner
Debney Meadows Primary School – Highly Commended

Vocational Education and Training (accredited training)

VU Together Against Racism Working Group – Winner

Vocational Education and Training (pre-accredited community-based training)

River Nile Learning Centre – Winner
BSL Cross Cultural Consultancy – Highly Commended

Emergency services

Victorian State Emergency Service Greater Dandenong Unit – Winner

Health

Program for Refugee Immunisation Monitoring and Education – Winner
Silva Nazaretian – Highly Commended

Justice

Northern Community Legal Centre and South-East Monash Legal Service – Winner
Eastern Community Legal Centre & Eastern Health – Highly Commended

Local government

City of Greater Bendigo – Winner
SALDHIG Project – Highly Commended

Media

iIMPACT Magazine – Winner
Can We Talk About It?! Podcast – Highly Commended

Premier's Award for Community Harmony

Cultura Pako Festa 2023 – Winner
Ian Green OAM – Highly Commended

Police

Police Annual Multicultural Award

Leading Senior Constable Heath Williams – Winner
Detective Senior Constable Tana Griffiths – Winner
Inspector Dean Clinton – Winner

Police Community Exemplary Award

Brooke Harding – Ramadan Care Packages – Winner

Police Multicultural Media Award

Diversity Recruitment Program Media Campaign – Winner

Police Annual Protective Service Officer Multicultural Award

PSO Sergeant Pushp Sidhu – Winner

PSO Sergeant Simarpal Kaur – Winner

Refugee advocacy

Free to Feed – Winner

Bendigo Karen Youth Network – Highly
Commended

Sport

City in the Community – Winner

Bendigo Community Health Services – Highly
Commended

Youth Leadership

Rhea Werner – Winner

Bendigo Karen Youth Network – Highly
Commended

Multicultural Honour Roll inductees

The Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll
recognises people who have made exceptional
and lasting contributions to multiculturalism in
Victoria.

- Naba Masad Alfayadh
- Ayesha Bux
- Giuseppe Cannata
- 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 (Eddie) Micallef
- Nawal Kishore Moudgil
- Mohamed Hadi Omer
- Asvin Phorugngam
- Nola Radiotis
- Hadi Saab
- Helen Stamoulis
- Kaja Starinskas
- Mannie Kaur Verma
- Deepak Vinayak OAM
- Gloria Yuen



Appendix 5: 2023 Film Festival Award Recipients

2023 Multicultural Film Festival award recipients

The Multicultural Film Festival (MFF) celebrates multiculturalism through the lens of short films. These films explore stories of cultural diversity and life in multicultural Australia.

Outcomes of the 2023 Multicultural Film Festival:

Best Short Fiction Film

Winner

Leopard

Directed by Kamil Domaradzki and Ali Zoghi

Written by Kamil Domaradzki

Produced by Ali Zoghi and Christie Heilig

Honourable mention

Jia

Directed and written by Vee Shi

Produced by Nicholson Ren, Vee Shi and Taysha McFarland

Best Short Non-Fiction Film

Winner

Beyond the Cut

Directed, written, and produced by Daniel Guerrero

Honourable mention

Mandarin

Directed and produced by Ji Li, Wanshu Li and Mingyang Yao

Best Open Category Film

Winner

Australian Mongrel

Directed by Rocco Fazzari and Belinda Lopez

Produced by Rocco Fazzari

Emerging Filmmaker

Winner

Kaede Miyamura

Director and writer of *Kotoba*

Produced by Evangeline Parks

Chairperson's Choice

Winner

Two Dollars

Directed and written by Natalia Cricri

Produced by Natalia Cricri and Luke Smith

People's Choice

Winner

Jia

Directed and written by Vee Shi

Produced by Nicholson Ren, Vee Shi and Taysha McFarland

2023 Official Selection

An Ode to My Demin Jacket

Directed by Christa Fiona Hill

Written and produced by Jill Sioson

Burnout

Directed, written and produced by Jonathon Charlie Copson-Pacal

Djaambi

Directed and written by Joel Brown

Produced by Jodie Kirkbride

Going Home – Về Nhà

Directed, written, and produced by Han Nhi Ngo

Likes

Directed and written by Sheena Reyes

Produced by Erin Davoren Lewis



Multicultural Film Festival 2023

Mei-Mei, Speak More Chinese
Directed by Joanne Tindale
Written and produced by Bon-Wai Chou



Multicultural Film Festival 2023

Melbourne Busker Pop Singer Frankie 33888 Does a Documentary
Directed by Ruairi Walsh
Produced by Chad Aizicowitz



Multicultural Film Festival 2023

Ran
Directed and written by Kiko Wayne Jr
Produced by Dave Kelman and Bluebird Foundation

Surrounds
Directed by Juno Shean
Written by Jason Baker



Multicultural Film Festival 2023

The Choice to Love
Directed, written, and produced by Anna Dvorak

Town Common
Directed by Vince Lovecchio

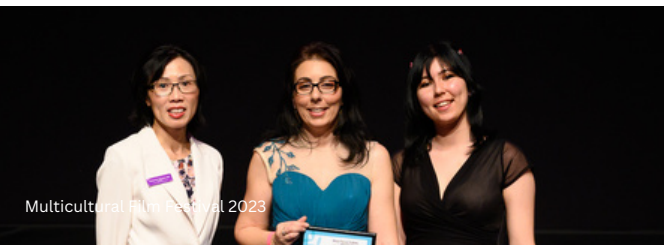


Multicultural Film Festival 2023

Yiayia Mou (My Grandmother)
Directed, written and produced by Koraly Dimitriadis



Multicultural Film Festival 2023



Multicultural Film Festival 2023



Multicultural Film Festival 2023



Multicultural Film Festival 2023







To receive this document in another format email the Victorian Multicultural Commission on contact@vmc.vic.gov.au

Annual Report 2023–24

This report includes core work and key achievements of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, over 2023–24, in context with Commission objectives and functions as outlined in the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011.

The information provided in this report is accurate as of 30 June 2024.

Disclaimer

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