

HUME CITY COUNCIL

Submission to Victoria's Multicultural Review



hume.vic.gov.au
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 **HUME**
CITY COUNCIL



"Hume City is a vibrant, resilient and supportive community because of our diversity. It shapes all that we do in delivering our programs and services for people of many different backgrounds, cultures and faiths.

We need the support of other levels of Government to ensure that the lives of our culturally diverse communities continued to be enriched and that they always be proud to call Hume home."

Mayor of Hume City, Councillor Jarrod Bell

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Hume City Council recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage within the municipality and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, which includes the existing family members of the Gunung-Willam-Balluk clan, as the Traditional Custodians of this land.

Council embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living cultures as a vital part of Australia's identity and recognises, celebrates and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

Executive Summary

The Victorian Government plays a critical role in supporting the entire community through the development of policies, the delivery of programs and services and by providing financial support that build the capacity of groups to support their own communities – all which help to improve the everyday lives of Victorians.

Multicultural communities heavily rely on this work as they are often faced with challenges that the rest of the community don't understand – long-held and out-dated views on immigration, increased volatility due to overseas conflicts and the rise of social commentary that drives racism.

Hume City Council proudly partners with the Victorian Government in the delivery of programs and services that support our entire community. This includes maternal and child health, preschool, community safety and the delivery of important infrastructure that creates places for people to come together, build connections and celebrate all the great things that make Hume City a wonderful place to live, work and play.

As one of Australia's most culturally diverse communities, we deliver a range of services for our multicultural community, but there is more that we could do with the support of the Victorian Government.

Opportunities exist for the Victorian Government to partner with Local Government to help them deliver on their commitments under the Victorian Multicultural Statement. Council's submission to the Victorian Multicultural Review highlights several recommendations where investment or policy changes can make a real difference to lives of culturally diverse communities.

We know that we cannot support communities all on our own – it is only through collaborative approaches with all levels of Government and the community sector that communities can flourish.



About Hume City

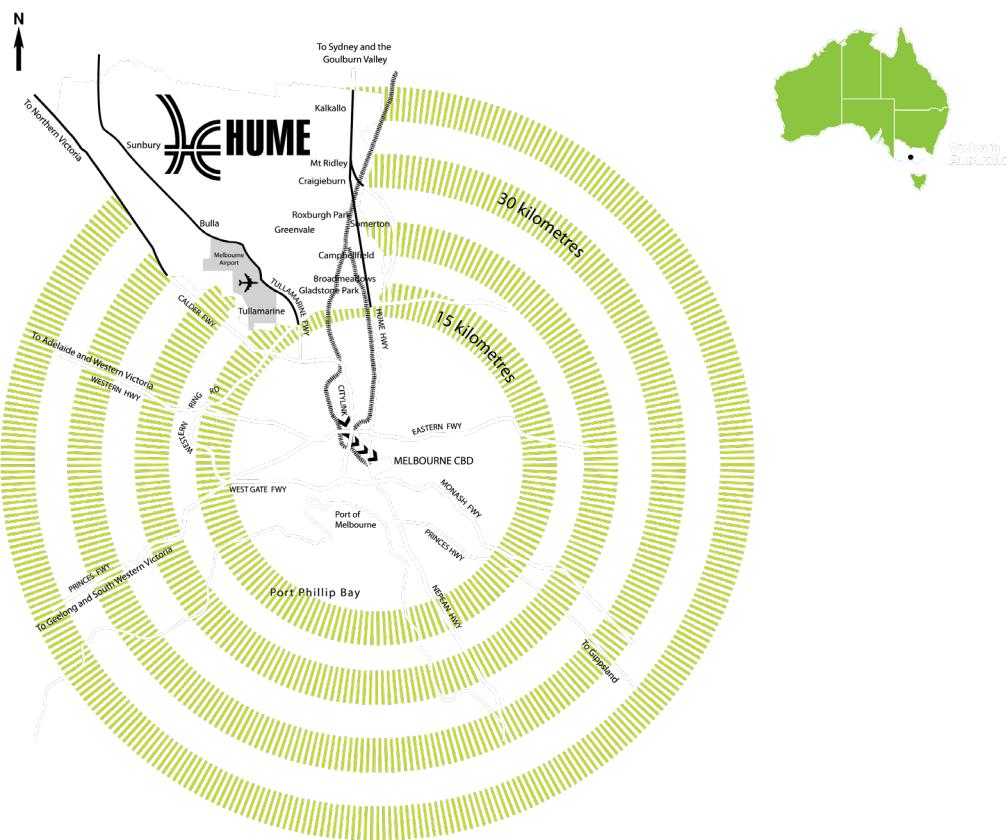
Hume is a place of great contrasts – in geography, economy, background and cultural diversity. Located just 15 kilometres north of the centre of Melbourne, Hume City is one of the fastest growing and most culturally diverse communities in Australia.

Hume's population is expected to grow to 397,453 by 2041 from its current estimated 250,001 (source: id profile™). Over the next five to twenty years, urban growth, densification of established areas, and related changes in population and household structures will drive an increase in service delivery and infrastructure requirements.

Hume City covers an area of more than 504 square kilometres. It stretches 30 kilometres from east to west, and over 22 kilometres from north to south. The southern parts of Hume City are represented by well-established suburbs. . In the north of Hume are our rapidly developing new suburbs and employment areas, including the future Metropolitan Activity Centre at Cloverton, 35 kilometres from the city centre.

In the west of the municipality, Sunbury is a well-established town, with heritage places around the centre and new areas that expand in all directions in a spoke and hub development pattern. Separated from the municipality's east by rural areas that protect the operations of Melbourne Airport, Sunbury is more than 35 kilometres from the CBD.

Hume's communities are served by major road transit routes including the Tullamarine Freeway, Western Ring Road, Hume Freeway and Calder Freeway. Melbourne Airport, in the south of Hume, is part of a significant industrial area in the south and east of the municipality. Logistics and related businesses in Hume benefit from access to multiple freeway networks in addition to Melbourne Airport.



Hume City's Cultural Diversity

Hume City's diverse community is reflected in its population, with residents hailing from over 170 different countries and speaking more than 155 languages. Approximately 40% of Hume's residents were born overseas, compared to 36% for Greater Melbourne. Hume has the largest population of people born in Türkiye in Australia, and the second-largest population of those born in Iraq. Between 2016 and 2021, there was significant growth in residents from Nepal, Syria, India, and Pakistan. Areas in Hume City where close to half of residents were born overseas include Roxburgh Park, Broadmeadows, Craigieburn, Kalkallo, and Campbellfield.

Almost half (49%) of Hume City's population speaks a language other than English at home, notably higher than Greater Melbourne's 34%. In some areas, such as Roxburgh Park, Campbellfield, Meadow Heights, Dallas, and Broadmeadows, more than 60% of people speak a language other than English. The most common non-English languages are Arabic, Turkish, Punjabi, Assyrian, and Chaldean.

Religion plays a significant role in the lives of Hume's residents, with around 74% identifying with a religion, compared to 56% in Greater Melbourne. The most common religions in Hume are Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Anglicanism. Hume has the largest Islamic population in Victoria and the third largest in Australia.

As of 2021, almost one quarter of Hume's total population (22.2%) were permanent migrants who arrived in Australia between 2000 and 2021. Hume City has the third largest number of migrants across all Victorian local government areas. Of Hume's permanent migrants more than one in three (34.0%) entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program and two in five under the Skilled Program (40.6%). Hume City has the largest number of permanent migrants who arrived under the Humanitarian Program, across all Victorian local government areas, and accounts for one-fifth of Victoria's total humanitarian intake. In fact, Hume is home to the second largest population of humanitarian migrants across all of Australia.



How Hume City Council supports our culturally diverse community

As one of Australia's most culturally diverse communities, Hume City Council plays a critical role in supporting and promoting community connectedness and social cohesion for people from over 170 different countries, speaking more than 155 languages. Approximately 40% of Hume's residents were born overseas, compared to 36% for Greater Melbourne.

Council is a leading provider of services for multicultural communities. Responsibility for these services is often shared with other government agencies, not-for-profit, non-government organisations and private industry.

Council facilitates, partners and undertakes planning with a range of other agencies and service providers to support and promote cultural diversity in Hume City and we play an important role in advocating on behalf of the community to other levels of government and service providers to ensure the needs of diverse communities are prioritised and addressed.

Our work is guided by Council's Hume Multicultural Framework which outlines the goals, principles and practices of working with the varied multicultural communities of Hume, across all of Council's roles and functions.

The Framework is further supported by a dedicated Multicultural Communications Framework which drills into the practical tools, actions and processes Council uses to improve our communication with all our communities.

These two Frameworks are underpinned by Council's longstanding commitment to social justice that recognises our ethical duty and legislative obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of our community, and to hold ourselves accountable for human rights outcomes.

Our Social Justice Charter seeks to advance a fair and just society by promoting respect for everyone in our community, improving access, inclusion and participation in community life, improving community wellbeing and reducing the root causes of disadvantage.

Our Charter acknowledges that some members of our community are more likely than others to face barriers in critical areas of everyday life. Council is committed to removing these barriers, particularly for the priority cohorts identified in our Charter.

Victorian Government — what is working well

The Victorian Government offers a broad range of grants, programs, and services to support new, emerging, and existing multicultural communities across Victoria. However, language barriers, limited outreach, and reliance on mainstream channels often leave multicultural communities unaware of available services, leading to unintentional exclusion from vital support.

The aspirations communicated through the Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement values and pursuit of outcomes to promote, enhance and celebrate multiculturalism are sound and consistent with Hume City Council's Community Vision, Social Justice Charter and Multicultural Framework.

The Victorian Government currently funds a range of organisations to provide tailored, specialised support for migrants and refugees, particularly those who have arrived in Australia through humanitarian programs. Access to these services is especially critical in our community, which is home to the second-largest population of humanitarian migrants in the country.

It is imperative that the Victorian Government continues to invest in and support these vital services to ensure that multicultural communities across Victoria are safe, healthy, and have equitable rights and opportunities.¹



¹ Delivering on Victoria's Multicultural Policy Statement – Good Health and Wellbeing Domain

Improving community harmony

The Victorian Government supports important Council programs that help promote harmony, such as Multicultural Playgroups and our Community Hubs program (see Case Study 1), which was instigated in Hume and rolled out across Australia. Many of our local community groups benefit from the Government's grants including Seniors Support and Festivals and Events grants.

However, there is room for the Victorian Government to better support community harmony. The community would benefit from:

- Funding for migrant and newly arrived communities to build understanding and capacity of education and service systems.²
- Increased funding for more multicultural playgroups
- Increased (and ongoing) funding to allow the expansion of Community Hubs model to more primary schools and implement a similar Hubs model for secondary schools.³
- The inclusion of Local Government eligibility for Multicultural grants to effectively coordinate and partner in delivering initiatives or deliver programs/events of scale with community.⁴ (see Case Study 2)
- Better access to Mental Health First Aid training for community leaders.
- Visible support for the Back Your Neighbour campaign, led by the Australia-wide Mayoral and Councillor Taskforce, which advocates for fairer treatment of people seeking asylum while their refugee claims are processed by the Federal Government.⁵
- That a dedicated Victorian Multicultural Public Arts Program be established, similar to the Victorian Women's Public Art Program, to recognise the achievements, contributions and leadership of multicultural communities through public art, statues and monuments and collections, writing and publications of migration stories across the state.
- That there is greater support for multicultural aged care, noting that current aged care services often fail to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of many communities.

More fundamentally, the Victorian Government has a responsibility to show leadership in rejecting division amongst the community as silence drives discord. All levels of government need to be swift, strong and vocal in their support of the fundamental tenets of social justice and human rights, both here and abroad.



2 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Good Health and Wellbeing* domain
 3 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Full participation in society* domain
 4 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Connected to culture and community* domain
 5 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Genuine equality* domain

Better access to Government services

The Victorian Government has an opportunity to strengthen partnerships between State Government, Local Government and community-based organisations to improve access to all services.

Councils are the tier of government closest to the community, and represent and engage with diverse, multicultural communities across Victoria with the support of local community organisations and non-government organisations and we all play a vital role in supporting and advocating for community.

There is a leadership role that the Victorian Government could play in bringing together existing networks, across regions, to better promote cultural understanding and collaboration.

The Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement recognises that a partnership approach is a “*proven approach to multiculturalism*”. By fostering stronger collaboration between all levels of government and community organisations, the Victorian Government can improve service coordination and delivery at the grassroots level, ensuring that multicultural communities have equitable access to the services they need.

There is a need to review and monitor the effectiveness of the *Better Practice Guide for Engaging with Multicultural Communities*, as it is applied inconsistently across state government departments and programs. This would improve the Victorian Government’s ability to deliver Government services more effectively for culturally diverse community members.¹

Lastly, there is a need for secure, ongoing funding in various service delivery areas such as bilingual workers across key sectors such as schools, youth services (see Case Study 3), family violence support² and community organisations to foster greater inclusion and access to all services.

1 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Genuine equality domain*
2 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Safe and Secure domain*

Preventing racism and discrimination

In 2023, Hume City Council collaborated with Victoria University to produce the *Understanding Reporting Barriers and Support Needs of People Experiencing Racism* report. It recommends more joined-up approaches between levels of government, businesses and community organisations and requires further investment by the Victorian Government to make real and significant improvements in addressing racism and discrimination.

Hume statistics indicated that the highest frequency of racist incidents occur in shopping centres, businesses, public transport and in schools. Hume is home to more women wearing hijab than any other part of Melbourne—and many have been subject to both verbal and physical attacks. We urge the Victorian Government to invest in targeted collaboration with shopping centre owners, public transport providers, businesses and schools to:

- Embed recommendations from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) Discrimination in the workplace for employers
- Support employers to review current employment practices and deliver staff and bystander intervention training for identified workers (e.g. security services, staff, bus/tram drivers), and ensure staff understand their “positive duty” to prevent and respond to racism and build ability to appropriately respond to racism via clear reporting pathways.¹
- Expand the existing Victorian Government Local Anti-Racism Initiatives Grants Program (LARIGP) for local anti-racism to include schools and Councils.
- Provide longer term funding options so successful organisations can embed their work into the community
- Develop state-wide but targeted anti-racism campaigns
- Improve communication between the Victorian Government’s Anti-Racism Taskforce and LGAs/ local-level Anti-Racism networks.²
- Promote the VEOHRC Community Reporting Tool (CRT) and make it widely known.
- Improve or augment data collection within the CRT to make it more accessible and meaningful to guide future actions.



1 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Full participation in society* domain
 2 Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Safe and Secure* domain

Promoting cultural understanding, interfaith dialogue, respect and collaboration

Hume City Council has a strong history of supporting community-led initiatives to enhance community engagement, information dissemination and promote cultural understanding and interfaith dialogue, however Councils need to be better supported by the Victorian Government to ensure that local interfaith networks continue to thrive.

The Hume Interfaith Network (HIN) (see Case Study 4) was established in 2001, to:

- Develop harmonious relationships between all people who live, work or practice faith in the City of Hume
- Create peace, understanding and respect with one another's beliefs, cultures and traditions
- Foster social harmony, inclusivity and dialogue rather than promoting one religion over another or debating religious beliefs
- Provide a space to celebrate our similarities and share our differences to foster peace and goodwill.

Members of the HIN have collaborated with Council to deliver initiatives that strengthen social cohesion, deepen mutual respect and promote community participation and wellbeing for community members of different faiths. Activities have included Harmony Week and Refugee Week celebrations, Places of Worship Tours, Multifaith Planting Day, Interfaith Sports Day and interfaith and community forums and events.

Currently, the HIN is supported by Council, however investment in Interfaith networks varies across Councils (with some interfaith networks now defunct) and some suffer from limited resources to support interfaith networks reaching their full potential

Additional to the HIN, the Hume Multicultural Advisory Group (MAG) is delivering strong benefits for the Hume City Community. The MAG, which Council convenes, is a professional network of service providers that aims to strengthen service provision and ensure services are accessible to our multicultural communities.

The VMC Multifaith Advisory Group (VMC MAG) comprises 27 faith representatives across Victoria but there is currently little interaction between Hume's networks and the VMC MAG. The Hume Interfaith Network holds a wealth of untapped knowledge for the Victorian Government to draw on and better resourcing the VMC MAG to engage with Local Government would improve the way faith communities are engaged in decision making processes.³

There is an opportunity for two-way dialogue between Hume's representative committees and Victorian State Government; these committees' greatest strength is in engaging with community leaders to understand key issues, concerns and priorities of Hume's multicultural community and initiatives or collaborates on projects to respond to the needs and providing an interface between community and Council.

We also believe that there are improvements that can be made at the Precinct Structure Planning process including designating land for cultural and faith-based schools and increasing opportunities for the integration of religious and cultural facilities within neighbourhoods—not relegated to industrial zones or Green Wedge land, which limits accessibility and isolates and separates religious and cultural communities from the rest of the community.

³ Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - Connected to culture and community domain

Empowering community to contribute to decision-making processes

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) has been an active and collaborative agency for many years. Engaging with Local Government to facilitate the inclusion of the community voice has worked well but there is much to learn from the past.

As an example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hume worked closely with the VMC to ensure the voices of multicultural and multifaith communities was heard and considered. Since the pandemic has finished there has been a gap in engagement with Local Government.

We commend the VMC for introducing the Multicultural Youth Network and recommend it's continued support, but there is scope for better utilisation of many existing mechanisms to improve communities' access to State Government decision making.⁴

There is a growing need for community members to be educated on civic engagement, democracy, governance and community leadership. Hume's *Community Change Makers* program, and our *Welcome to Hume* tours provide education to community members around how to engage with democracy and understand the levers of government, but our reach is relatively small compared to demand.⁵

We request that the Victorian Government actively explores pathways to increase representation of culturally diverse Victorians on government boards and advisory panels—mirroring the success of the Gender Equality Act, which has driven greater gender parity.

Better supports for the settlement of recently arrived people is paramount. Many people do not understand their rights or the legal supports available to them. Many needs are unmet or misunderstood. Support services are stretched, and do not offer the longevity of support that people need to ensure they successfully adapt to life in Australia.

⁴ Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Connected to culture and community domain*

⁵ Delivering on Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement - *Genuine equality domain*

Conclusion

The Victorian Government's role in supporting multicultural communities is effective but there is scope and opportunity for greater leadership and collaboration with all levels of Government and the community.

Multicultural communities are not an adjunct to mainstream society; they are the reality of Victoria. Services and programs need to be designed from the outset with diversity front and centre. When we come together, we have shown that we can create positive change for all communities, as our submission have demonstrated.

Council would welcome a stronger relationship with the Victorian Government to co-deliver programs and joined-up approaches to drive better outcomes for the multicultural communities of Victoria.



Case Studies

Case study 1: Community Hubs program

The National Community Hubs Program (NCHP) was modelled on the successful Hume pilot project: *Supporting Parents, Developing Children*. The 2011 – 2013 pilot funded by the Scanlon Foundation, State Government and Hume City Council established 9 hubs in the Hume region to address the poor participation rates of newly arrived migrants and refugees in early years education.

Pilot program evaluation concluded that place based, and people centred programs not only build the education participation rates of migrant families but played a significant role in establishing social connections and increased economic participation.

Currently, as a proven, place based, and people centred program the National Community Hubs Model highlights the significance of partnerships and joined up approaches to achieve better outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Today Hume City Council guide and resource 15 Hubs in local primary schools as part of the NCHP which has expanded to over 100 Hubs nationally.

As the program is people centred the Hub delivers relevant programs and referrals based on presenting needs. The ability to establish trust and adapt is paramount to the Hubs success as demonstrated by the 2024 the Hume hubs outcomes:



Case study 2: Connecting community to services

Council hosts several key “significant date” events each year, such as Harmony Week and Refugee Week, which are designed to engage and celebrate our multicultural communities. These annual events are highly anticipated and well-attended by people from diverse backgrounds.

Council also convenes the Multicultural Advisory Group (MAG), a professional network of organisations servicing the multicultural community. The MAG partnered with Council to consult community leaders, uncovering a key issue: while there are a range of support services and programs, they are often difficult to access or unknown to the community due to various barriers.

In response, the Council and MAG worked together to organise a Community Services Expo, held at a local community centre. The event aimed to connect service providers with the multicultural community, particularly those in new-growth areas of Hume. The expo's goal was to foster stronger engagement between support services and the multicultural community, addressing isolation and limited access to assistance, while helping community members build their knowledge and confidence in accessing available resources.



- Images of MAG Happy and Safe Communities: Community Services Expo



Case study 3: HIN Youth Community Connections Project

In 2014, Council and the Hume Interfaith Network, supported by Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, undertook a project dedicated to empowering young people of faith, to have a voice.

The project targeted young people who lived, worked, studied or recreated in the Hume municipality, who were from diverse faiths and cultural groups aged 25 years and under.

The outcomes of this program included building youth engagement and strengthening social cohesion.

This was achieved by Council through facilitation, networking, participation and sharing of knowledge of young people of diverse faith and strengthened the network of volunteers, faith groups and community groups working together toward the same common goals of acceptance and harmony; while building capacity, skills and knowledge of the Youth Ambassadors who were identified to provide leadership to their peers.

The Council funded Hume Youth Engagement and Pathway Unit (Youth Services) provides a range of free, generalist programs and supports to young people aged 6 to 24 years who live, visit, study or work in Hume. Our service includes the Mental Health, Wellbeing and Leadership Team and the Partnerships, Engagement and Pathways Team.

Hume City Council works in partnership with a broad range of youth prevention, early intervention and tertiary services. It supports large numbers of young people to build their capacity, resilience and wellbeing so that they can be connected, healthy and thrive.

Case study 4: Hume Interfaith Network

The Hume Interfaith Network (HIN) was established in 2001 to:

- Develop harmonious relationships between all people who live, work or practice faith in Hume City
- Create peace, understanding and respect with one another's beliefs, cultures and traditions
- Foster social harmony, inclusivity and dialogue rather than promoting one religion over another or debating religious beliefs
- Provide a space to celebrate similarities and share differences to foster peace and goodwill.

Current membership includes 18 faith leaders from across Hume, a nominated Councillor and representatives from Victoria Police.

Members of the HIN have collaborated with Council to deliver initiatives that strengthen social cohesion, deepen mutual respect and promote community participation and wellbeing for community members of different faiths. Activities These including an Interfaith Sports Day and Tour to Places of Worship during Harmony Week, and a multifaith planting day during Refugee Week, and Interfaith Dinners

Since its formation, the HIN have also been a conduit between Council and the community, in order to raise the profile of important community concerns and messages.



- Hume Interfaith Sports Day



- Hume Places of Worship tour

**For more information, contact our
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