



2025-28

MULTICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

Fostering diversity and inclusion within the Northern Grampians

Northern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges Traditional Owners; Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagalk and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples who are the Traditional Custodians of the land we call Northern Grampians Shire.

We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to our other Aboriginal clans.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction |
| 2 | Why we need a Multicultural Action Plan |
| 3 | Developing the plan |
| 4 | Engagement methods and key findings |
| 5 | What we heard |
| 6 | Establishing our priorities |
| 7 | Table of actions |



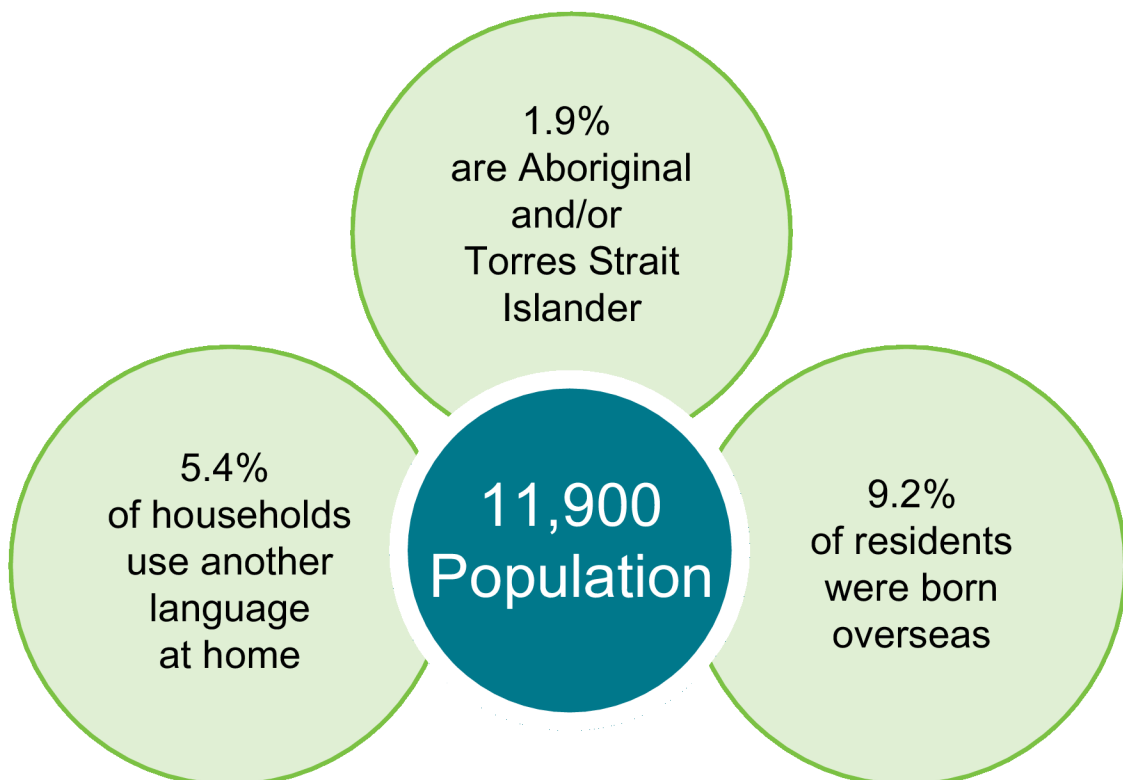
1. Introduction

Australia is a vibrant and diverse country that highly values its multicultural heritage. This rich cultural landscape encompasses over 60,000 years of Indigenous culture and traditions, as well as more than 200 years of migration. The blending of these diverse backgrounds has created a unique and beautiful mosaic with each community contributing to the overall picture of Australia's diversity.

Northern Grampians Shire is a diverse cultural region that reflects a blend of its Indigenous heritage, historical European influences, and multicultural migration across generations. Regional industry demand and subsequent local employment opportunities have driven the notable growth of a younger and culturally diverse workforce from overseas.

As this new workforce continues to grow, engaging with new arrivals and the broader community is crucial to understanding the needs and challenges and opportunities to foster inclusion and community cohesion. In response to this changing landscape and to better support the region's growing diversity, council has taken steps to strengthen its commitment to multicultural inclusion and connection through a dedicated planning approach - the Multicultural Action Plan.

Northern Grampians Shire Community Profile



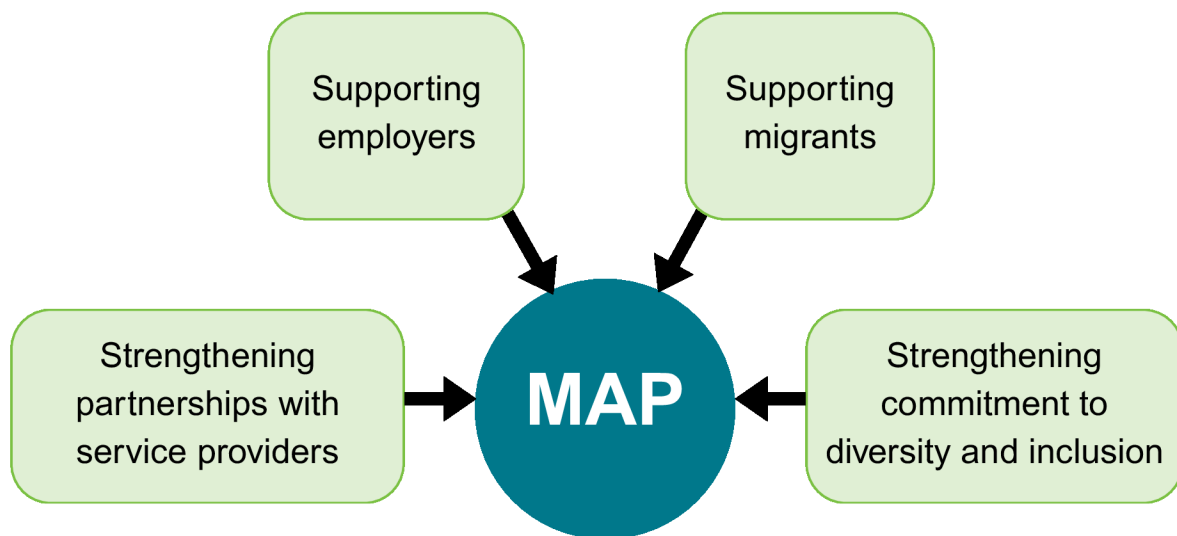
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census.



2. Why we need a Multicultural Action Plan

In 2022, the Northern Grampians Shire Council endorsed the OPAN (Opportunities Pyrenees, Ararat, and Northern Grampians) report, a collaborative work involving three local government areas: Pyrenees Shire, Ararat Rural City, and Northern Grampians Shire Council. The report offered valuable insights aimed at enhancing support for the shire’s growing multicultural community, identifying four key areas of opportunity: strengthening partnerships with service providers, supporting employers, supporting migrants, and strengthening commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Recognising the importance of attracting and retaining migrants to the region, as well as the social and economic benefits of cultural diversity more broadly, council subsequently initiated the development of a Multicultural Action Plan (MAP) to build on the key opportunities identified in OPAN. The aim of the MAP is to foster a more cohesive and inclusive community where individuals from diverse backgrounds can feel welcomed, included and respected.



To support the MAP implementation, council established a dedicated Multicultural Project Officer role. This role reinforces council’s focus on strengthening community connections, advocating for systemic change, and providing sustained support for multicultural residents. The officer will lead the implementation of actions outlined in the plan and coordinate ongoing stakeholder engagement to monitor progress and identify emerging needs. To keep the plan relevant and responsive, it will be reviewed annually to allow for strategy refinement based on evolving community priorities. The Multicultural Action Plan reflects our commitment to building a community where everyone feels welcomed, respected and heard.

“Give the support and help when they arrive and never stop the support until they feel part of the community.”

“Remember inclusivity is an ongoing process and the shire should continuously evaluate and adjust a truly welcoming environment for all.”

Source: Community quotes, 2023 Multicultural Action Plan Survey.



3. Developing the plan

The Multicultural Action Plan (MAP) was developed through extensive community engagement, desktop analysis, research into existing council strategies and plans, and consultation with other local government areas. The engagement, conducted in two stages between June and November 2023 with over 400 participants, provided significant insights. The objective of the engagement was to build a clearer picture of the shire’s cultural diversity and to learn about the lived experiences of both migrants and the broader community. These insights supported the development of the MAP, enabling council to better support the diverse communities in the region.

4. Engagement methods and key findings

Stage 1: Stakeholder interviews

Place-based interviews were conducted across the shire with key stakeholders engaged in supporting migrants. These conversations provided valuable historical and contextual insights into the existing migrant support initiatives.

Who we engaged with



- Community residents
- Multicultural community group leaders
- Local community group representatives and volunteers
- Regional Settlement Services Network
- NGSC Project Advisory Group members
- Local sporting clubs
- Employers and local businesses
- Other Local Governments supporting multicultural communities

Key findings

The engagement identified that a significant body of work had already been undertaken by local stakeholders in support of new migrants. However, these initiatives often relied on a small number of individuals, often volunteers, with limited resources. Sustainability was therefore identified as a key concern. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of gauging broader community sentiment, via a survey, with the co-benefit of awareness-raising. These insights informed the design of the Multicultural Action Plan Survey, implemented as Stage 2 of the engagement process to:

- Better understand the make-up and experience of the shire’s diverse multicultural community.
- Explore community sentiment towards multiculturalism.
- Identify barriers to inclusion and opportunities for participation.
- Raise cultural diversity awareness.



Engagement methods and key findings (cont'd)

Stage 2: Multicultural Action Plan Survey (MAPS)

To ensure broad participation, a range of place-based activation methods were used, including:

Multicultural Information and Community Engagement Sessions

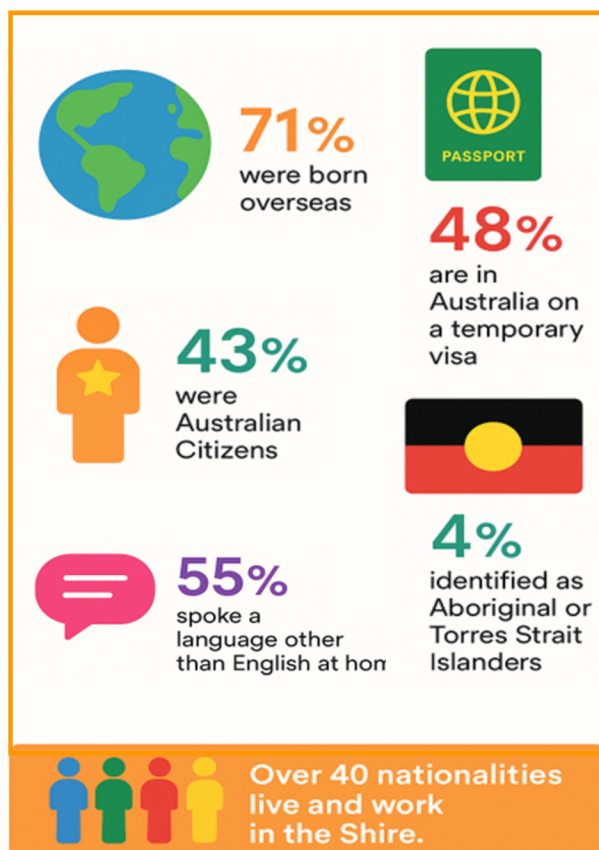
- Community lunch at Cato Park.
- Pop-up session at 108 Main Street Shop.
- Worksite visits across the region.
- Presentation of the MAPS at community group meetings.
- Engagement at various community events.

Media Promotion

- Promotion across NGSC media platforms and social media channels.
- Distribution of flyers, newsletters, and posts on community social media pages.
- Community noticeboard and local business flyers display.

Who we heard from

A total of 150 people completed the survey, representing the following demographics:



Nationalities living and working in the shire:

Australia, France, Argentina, Peru, Belgium, Croatia, Mauritius, Netherlands, Samoa, South Africa, Sweden, Japan, Thailand, USA, Wales, Fiji, Germany, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Brazil, New Zealand, Nauru, Sri Lanka, China, South Korea, Vanuatu, Taiwan, Timor-Leste, Philippines, Mongolia, Italy, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, Turkey, Canada, Chile, India, Greece, Nepal, Nigeria, Bangladesh

Language other than English at home:

Tagalog, Tetum, Bislama, Mandarin, Cantonese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, German, Spanish, Fijian, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Tamil, Mambae, Bahasa, Ilonggo, Bikol, Hiligainon, Cebuano, Swedish, Samoan, Nepali, Malay, Hokkien, Maltese, Japanese, Croatian, Creole, Hubei dialect, Afrikaans, Hinese



5. What we heard

Analysis of the responses gathered during the engagement process revealed an overall sentiment that Northern Grampians Shire is a welcoming and inclusive community with a strong appreciation of the benefits of cultural diversity. It also indicated a history of efforts to support new migrants across various groups and services in the community.

Additionally, several valuable insights were gathered, identifying gaps and opportunities to further strengthen community inclusion for multicultural communities, detailed under three themes below.

1 Cultural awareness and social connections gap

The community highlighted that people from diverse backgrounds often face barriers to feeling welcome and included. These barriers can prevent them from fully participating in events and activities, which in turn limits opportunities for meaningful social connections and reduces overall cultural understanding. Suggestions in the survey for how we could address these gaps included:

- Promotion of initiatives that foster cultural awareness and understanding of diverse cultures.
- Promotion of opportunities for locals and newcomers to connect and build stronger community bonds.
- Support for initiatives that celebrate diversity (eg. cultural festivals and arts).

“Education from kids to adults on embracing differences.”

“More awareness in the local community about different cultures, which could help acceptance and social cohesion.”

“All groups of people should be treated the same, no matter what race, religion, colour, sexual orientation or disability.”

“More cultural events linking locals to newcomers.”

“Monthly Multicultural meet and greet or welcome from the newly arrived.”

“Would love to see some kind of Multicultural festival to showcase the many cultures of people who live here.”

Source: Community quotes, 2023 Multicultural Action Plan Survey.



What we heard (cont'd)

2 Barriers to services

The engagement indicated that many migrants in our community face additional challenges when trying to access local council and community services and that addressing these issues is essential to ensure equitable access and inclusion for all.

Barriers identified include:

- Lack of awareness and information (including translations) about social connection opportunities for new residents.
- Financial constraints.
- Visa conditions limiting access to local services.
- Hours of operation of local services.
- Limited access to information, resources and services in languages other than English.
- Transport limitations (driver's licence requirements, information, routes and timetables access and costs).
- Unfamiliarity with local systems and government processes.
- Lack of culturally appropriate service delivery.
- Language and communication barriers reducing understanding in services.

"I feel it would be VERY beneficial for our new cultures living in Stawell to have family memberships [at SSAC] and the opening hours, especially on weekends be extended."

"It is a problem interpretation services is very important access language interpretation services."

"It would be useful to have information boards available in the languages that are used by the people moving into to the area."

Source: Community quotes, 2023 Multicultural Action Plan Survey.



What we heard (cont'd)

3 Coordination, Collaboration and Sustainability

Community feedback acknowledged the many positive multicultural initiatives that have been delivered over the years, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen them through more strategic coordination, sustained support, and secure funding beyond short-term grants and volunteer reliance. Stakeholders highlighted the need for strong and coordinated partnerships across all sectors, with specific suggestions relating to:

- Coordinated and integrated responses across key stakeholders.
- Partnerships between council and industry employers support the migrant workforce.
- Inclusion of people from diverse cultural backgrounds in engagement and decision-making processes.
- Collaboration with education, schools, sporting clubs, service providers and community groups.
- Strengthening partnerships with state/federal agencies and multicultural organisations.

“I think that there is a lot of small groups trying to best support integration and believe a coordinated approach rather than ad hoc approach will get the best results. I believe everyone is trying their best but appears a little fragmented at times so to have this coordinated would be brilliant.”

“A multicultural council could be formed as an advisory and assistance and planning group.”

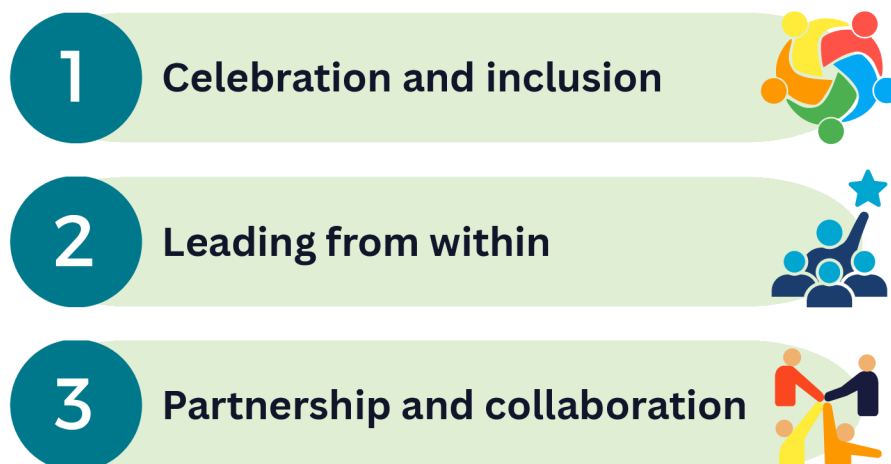
“Keep involved representative from different countries in your meetings.”

Source: Community quotes, 2023 Multicultural Action Plan Survey.



6. Establishing our priorities

The identified barriers and opportunities have been themed into the following areas and form the basis of the MAP.



These three themes reflect a shared vision for building a welcoming, inclusive, and cohesive community where cultural diversity is recognised and embraced. The MAP focuses on creating opportunities to celebrate different cultures and foster a sense of belonging for all. It empowers individuals and groups to take an active role in shaping initiatives, supports leadership from within, and encourages strong partnerships, ensuring long-term, sustainable outcomes that benefit people of all backgrounds.

Council's commitment to and implementation of the MAP will align with goals in local strategic plans, as well as various state and federal legislation.

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| Council plans & strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29• Open Space Sport and Recreation Strategy 2024-34• Strategic Workforce Plan 2021-25• Youth Strategy 2024-28• Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2021-31• Activate 2020-2030 |
| Government legislation (state & federal) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australia Multicultural Policy• Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986• Racial Discrimination Act 1975• Victorian Multicultural Act 2011• Victoria Multicultural Policy Statement |
| International links | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948• The International Convention |



7. Table of actions

1 Celebration and inclusion

| | |
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| Goal | We commit to continue building an inclusive and welcoming community that celebrates cultural diversity and fosters a greater sense of belonging for people from all cultures and backgrounds. |
| Strategy | Promoting opportunities that foster understanding, respect and celebration of cultural diversity, and strengthen inclusive practices across the shire. |

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| A C T I O N S | 1.1 Support significant multicultural festivals and events that promote awareness, understanding and celebration of cultural diversity. |
| | 1.2 Support multicultural groups to lead and advocate for their own cultural celebration events and activities. |
| | 1.3 Acknowledge and promote multicultural days of significance across council's communication platforms. |
| | 1.4 Support and promote inclusive citizenship ceremonies, celebrating and welcoming new citizens to the community. |
| | 1.5 Support Grampians Multicultural Hub in building its leadership and governance capacity. |
| | 1.6 Explore ongoing opportunities to engage and support multicultural communities across the shire township, including St Arnaud. |
| | 1.7 Explore opportunities for a volunteer-led peer support program for multicultural residents |



2

Leading from within



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| Goal | We will demonstrate leadership by ensuring council’s services, places and activities are responsive to the needs of multicultural communities. |
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| Strategy | Implementation of culturally inclusive governance, informed decision-making and staff capacity building, ensuring that the council’s internal culture, communications and community engagement reflect and respond to the diversity of the region. |
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A C T I O N S

- 2.1 Integrate cultural competency education into council staff induction and ongoing professional development processes.
- 2.2 Acknowledge and celebrate significant cultural recognition days/weeks within council’s channels internal communication channels.
- 2.3 Collaborate with multicultural community groups and internal stakeholders to facilitate access to public spaces and council facilities for recreational activities and celebration of civic and religious events.
- 2.4 Review council’s website translation options to ensure it reflects the diverse and changing language needs of the region.
- 2.5 Strengthen engagement opportunities between multicultural communities and council, to ensure culturally diverse voices are heard and represented in planning processes.
- 2.6 Investigate opportunity to adapt council's New Resident Handbook to include translated and culturally inclusive content, and make sure it's available in the right places for people to access.
- 2.7 Explore and promote multilingual resources at local libraries, and encourage multicultural community members to access and utilise library spaces for connection, learning and cultural inclusion.
- 2.8 Working with key stakeholders to strenghten connection and understanding between council services and the multicultural community.

3

Partnerships and collaboration



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| Goal | We will play an active role in a shared, ongoing effort, working with stakeholders to build a sustainable and inclusive approach to multicultural work that is grounded in empowerment and collaboration. |
| Strategy | Building and strengthening partnerships with stakeholders including employers, local organisations, government services, community groups and cultural organisations, educational and training providers and culturally diverse community leaders sharing ideas, knowledge, and resources. |

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| A C T I O N S | 3.1 Explore the development of a multicultural community reference group to provide insight and advice to council on multicultural matters. |
| | 3.2 Liaise with local industry employers to support the wellbeing and inclusion of migrant workers in the broader community. |
| | 3.3 Support PALM Community Connections Program to develop a local multicultural community network, designed to build meaningful connection to local groups, services and organisations. |
| | 3.4 Engage in collaboration opportunities with settlement service providers to enhance support for migrants, identify gaps and opportunities, and advocate collectively. |
| | 3.5 Support key stakeholders in their implementation of educational and skill development programs for multicultural communities. |
| | 3.6 Represent Northern Grampians Shire at the Settlement Committee Network, actively attending meetings and events |
| | 3.7 Strengthen collaboration with the Department of Home Affairs' BIRO officers to support local employers in understanding migration workforce trends and pathway opportunities. |
| | 3.8 Actively engage with key multicultural organisations and peak bodies, such as the Victorian Multicultural Commission, FECCA- of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia, to inform and enhance multicultural initiatives and provide channels for advocacy. |
| | 3.9 Engage in partnership opportunities with local and regional organisations to support the local multicultural community and address emerging needs. |

Contact details for the
Multicultural Project Officer
can be found on council's website
ngshire.vic.gov.au

Alternatively, they can be contacted by
phone: (03) 53588700 or
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