

# Cultural diversity guide

Multicultural Strategy - Department of Human Services



# Cultural diversity guide

Planning and delivering culturally appropriate  
human services

June 2004

Published by Policy and Strategic Projects Division, Victorian Government Department of Human Services

Melbourne Victoria

June 2004 (0710304)

Also available on the following DHS websites: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/) and <http://fac.dhs.vic.gov.au>

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Authorised by the State Government of Victoria, 555 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Printed by Impact Printing, 69-79 Fallon Street, Brunswick

## Ministers' foreword

Victoria's cultural diversity is one of its greatest attributes. Our community and the life we live are much richer as a result of the successive generations of people who have made their home here.

The Victorian Government's policies are founded on a view that supporting and respecting our cultural diversity will realise benefits for all Victorians. Regardless of country of birth, language or culture, Victorians share common aspirations for health and wellbeing, and for high quality health, housing and community services where and when they need them.

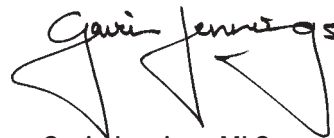
The State Government is committed to ensuring that all Victorians enjoy equal access to government services and are provided with the opportunity to participate fully as members of the community.

Government policy recognises that the human services sector - including the Department of Human Services - can face particular challenges in ensuring that Victorians with a low level of English proficiency enjoy the same level of access to high quality services as the broader community.

Without seeking to duplicate the detailed quality and accountability approaches pursued by individual programs and services, the Department of Human Services *Cultural diversity guide* offers advice as to how these challenges can be met, and illustrates how the human services sector is meeting its obligations. There are many inspiring examples of service providers - large and small, rural and metropolitan - from the health, housing, aged and community services sectors working in imaginative and innovative ways to improve service delivery for culturally and linguistic diverse Victorians.



**Candy Broad MLC**  
Minister for Housing



**Gavin Jennings MLC**  
Minister for Aged Care



**Hon Sherryl Garbutt MP**  
Minister for Community Services



**Hon Bronwyn Pike MP**  
Minister for Health

## **Acknowledgments**

The contribution of many Department of Human Services and funded agency staff to the development of this guide is gratefully acknowledged.

Particular acknowledgement is made of the important and ongoing role of the Ministerial Advisory Council for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, Human Services ([www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/index.htm](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/index.htm)).

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## Introduction

### Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this *Cultural diversity guide* is to assist programs and agencies by:

- supporting the human services system to meet its obligations under Whole-of-Government reporting on responsiveness to cultural diversity
- identifying a range of available strategies to improve cultural responsiveness and levers to effect cultural change, recognising that no single strategy suits every program and agency and there are many different pathways to equitable, high quality service provision
- illustrating the different strategies and levers with examples of good multicultural practice that already occur across the human services system
- providing guidance on additional resources and supports for programs and agencies in managing cultural diversity.

More than 40 per cent of Victorians were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.

A population rich in cultures and languages provides enormous social, cultural and economic benefits for Victoria. These benefits are clearly acknowledged in the key government policy documents: *Growing Victoria Together* and *Valuing Cultural Diversity*.

### Growing Victoria Together

The State Government recognises that the diverse cultural backgrounds, languages and abilities of Victorians are some of the state's greatest strengths. These strengths build on values of respect, cooperation and the protection of all Victorians' rights. Protecting these rights requires balanced law, accessible courts and an informed community. For further information related to Growing Victoria Together, refer to [www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au](http://www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au).

Victoria's cultural diversity also provides a significant challenge for the Department of Human Services and its funded agencies, in ensuring that Victorians from all backgrounds can enjoy access to human services on an equal footing, and are treated with respect and sensitivity.

The delivery of culturally responsive, equitable services is already a core quality expectation of department programs and funded agencies, underpinned by key government legislation and program standards and guidelines.

The Diversity Unit in the Department of Human Services provides leadership and direction on cultural diversity issues, including the development of the *Cultural diversity guide*.

## Valuing cultural diversity



The Government's *Valuing Cultural Diversity* policy statement outlines the core principles for promoting cultural diversity:

### Valuing diversity

- Fostering a community that recognises the values and benefits of a culturally rich and diverse society.
- Actively promoting respect and harmony and discouraging racism and negative stereotypes.

### Reducing inequality

- Recognising the right of people of diverse national, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds to practise, enjoy and share their culture.
- Having in place systems and procedures that will enable all Victorians access to government services and programs free from undue impediment.
- Ensuring government policies and strategies are responsive to all Victorians.

### Encouraging participation

- Encouraging an inclusive society that provides opportunities for all people to fully participate in public and civil life.
- Using appropriate media and promotional channels as a means to ensure government information reaches all.
- Identifying and addressing any barriers to full participation.

### Promoting the social, cultural and economic benefits of cultural diversity for all Victorians

- Promoting the benefits of a culturally and linguistically diverse society and the social, cultural and economic opportunities this provides to advance the wellbeing of all Victorians.
- Promoting to the Victorian community the benefits gained from cultural and linguistic diversity.

A copy of the *Valuing Cultural Diversity* policy statement is available at [www.voma.vic.gov.au](http://www.voma.vic.gov.au)

## 1. Understanding clients and their needs



Gathering accurate information on the cultural diversity of the client group is the key to planning for effective service provision for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients. Mapping the current client profile against the demographics of the service catchment can indicate under- or over-representation of the client group and may suggest the need to change the way services are promoted and delivered. By investigating service use and health trends, it may be possible to identify issues relevant to particular language or cultural groups. This may also indicate a need to develop new strategies tailored to certain cultural groups or target interventions to tackle specific health and welfare issues.

This knowledge needs to be updated regularly. The characteristics of the client population may change and service needs vary as existing cultural groups grow and age and become more experienced service users.

### Good examples

- ✓ A rural health service improves service planning and delivery following an analysis of presenting conditions mapped against the cultural profile of clients. Certain health conditions – for example, gestational diabetes – were found to be more prevalent in particular cultural groups.
- ✓ A metropolitan community health centre holds CALD focus groups to better understand factors preventing community members from accessing health services and inform service delivery planning.
- ✓ Several health and welfare agencies in a small rural town join together to develop culturally sensitive approaches for delivering services to newly arrived refugee community members.
- ✓ A rural shire council establishes a multicultural advisory group to provide advice to the council on multicultural issues.
- ✓ A large metropolitan hospital works in partnership with a community health service to develop a service tailored to newly arrived community members with HIV or hepatitis C.

## Key strategies

- Work towards including the three agreed 'core minimum data set' items in client data collection, that is:
  - country of birth
  - main language other than English spoken at home
  - proficiency in spoken English.
- If relevant, identify major patterns of under- or over-representation in service use that relate to particular communities or cohorts within a cultural group. Analyse the cause of these patterns and how they might be changed in the future.
- If relevant, identify major issues or differences in health and wellbeing outcomes of particular community groups compared to others. Look for evidence-based approaches to address these issues.
- Develop strategies and approaches that seek to engage and elicit the views of local CALD community groups.
- Identify cost-effective ways to maintain the currency of this information for the catchment area (including making best use of the statewide and national information on demography and service usage identified in this framework).

- ✓ A peak body undertakes a research project to identify why a particular cultural group makes limited use of a major service offered by its constituent community service organisation members.
- ✓ A metropolitan multicultural agency holds an open day to publicise its programs and varied client groups.

### Where to go for further information

- The Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs website includes a range of useful information on multicultural issues. Follow the links to Census material at [www.voma.vic.gov.au](http://www.voma.vic.gov.au)
- The department's Funded Agency Channel (accessible to registered users) provides links to a range of useful government and research sites at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac)
- The Department of Human Services Primary Health Knowledge Base includes useful demographic planning data sets at <http://hnb.dhs.vic.gov.au/rrhacs/phkb/phkb.nsf>
- Draft regional plans for the Home and Community Care (HACC) program include key demographic data on older CALD age cohorts, including projected trends at [www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/hacc/regplan.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/hacc/regplan.htm)
- The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs website provides useful migration data resources at [www.immi.gov.au/settle/data](http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/data)



## 2. Partnerships with multicultural and ethno-specific agencies



Ethno-specific and multicultural agencies in Victoria provide a specialist focus on meeting the needs of CALD groups. Working in partnership with such organisations is one way that mainstream agencies can be more responsive and effective in delivering services to CALD communities. Equally, specialist agencies benefit from partnerships with mainstream agencies.

Specialist agencies provide a range of services and operate across different catchment areas. Some agencies provide direct care services, either alone or collaboratively with mainstream agencies, and some provide client advocacy services. Other ethno-specific and multicultural agencies provide consultancy and information services to mainstream organisations working with clients from CALD backgrounds.

### Good examples

- ✓ A metropolitan community health centre collaborates with the local multicultural agency to produce an annual cultural plan.
- ✓ A community service organisation engages a specialist multicultural organisation to recruit ethno-specific volunteer workers to assist elderly community members to use local services.
- ✓ A rural community health service works with the local multicultural agency to establish ethno-specific elderly citizens groups.
- ✓ An independent living project is completed as a joint venture with a local multicultural agency to ensure that client needs are catered for now and into the future.
- ✓ A rural shire council engages the local multicultural agency to assist in developing suitable 'meals on wheels' for CALD community members.
- ✓ An ethno-specific agency organises a fundraising initiative for a major mainstream health provider to assist in the purchase of medical equipment to treat genetic diseases prevalent in that ethnic community.

## Key strategies

- Identify specialist agencies relevant to community groups within the service delivery area and find out about the work of the specialist organisations and the resources that might be available.
- Identify opportunities for formal and informal collaboration with specialist agencies. This could involve service development and working with clients, as well as involving the specialist agency in organisation development and staff training activities.
- Ensure that staff know about ethno-specific and multicultural agencies, are familiar with their work and are trained to recognise opportunities for collaboration.
- Where more formal service delivery links with specialist agencies are already in place, ensure that practice and service delivery are effectively supported by responsive and flexible administrative and staff support systems.

- ✓ A metropolitan health service establishes a formal agreement with a community radio station to enable inpatients to listen to programs in a variety of community languages.
- ✓ A neighbourhood house works with a local multicultural agency to develop a suitable occasional care service for CALD women accessing English language classes provided by the house.

### Where to go for further information

- Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, containing the Multicultural Resources Directory 2002-03 at [www.voma.vic.gov.au](http://www.voma.vic.gov.au)
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria [www.eccv.org.au](http://www.eccv.org.au) Online multicultural services directory at [www.eccv.org.au/db/](http://www.eccv.org.au/db/)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission at [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au)
- The department's Funded Agency Channel (accessible to registered users) highlights cultural diversity resources, including some key multicultural partners of the department at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac)



### 3. A culturally diverse workforce



The responsiveness of an organisation to the communities it serves can be greatly enriched by developing and maintaining a culturally diverse and aware workforce. Employing staff who speak other languages or have experience and understanding of other cultures can be an important strategy for improving an organisation's awareness of and sensitivity to its community. In the same way, cultural awareness training for staff can raise consciousness of cultural issues more broadly and contribute significantly to improved service delivery.

Building a culturally diverse workforce takes time and planning. In some cases, opportunities to consider recruiting CALD staff will arise as a result of a single vacancy. At other times, the roll-out of a new service may present a unique opportunity to consider whether the service would be enhanced by recruitment of CALD workers.

#### Good examples

- ✓ A metropolitan shire council ensures its staff recruitment and selection policy results in a diverse workforce.
- ✓ A metropolitan health service establishes a registry listing all bilingual and/or multilingual workers, to encourage the appropriate use of language skills in the workplace, and supports these staff in undertaking formal testing and accreditation for their language skills.
- ✓ A rural community service organisation recruits an ethno-specific outreach worker to work with families from the worker's language group.
- ✓ A preschool association develops and promotes demonstration bilingual and multilingual preschool programs.
- ✓ In staffing a new residential facility, a regional aged care service provider identifies bilingualism as a highly desirable skill and develops a strategy to ensure recruitment of bilingual staff.
- ✓ A mental health service establishes a bilingual case management service.

## Key strategies

- Work towards developing a recruitment strategy that seeks to increase the number of bilingual/multilingual and/or CALD staff. Such a strategy can extend to volunteer staff and aim for appropriately skilled representation on boards of management and advisory groups.
- Ensure that the work of bilingual/multilingual and/or CALD staff provides opportunities for contact with community members who share their cultural background. This might be through direct casework or targeted ethnic community development opportunities.
- Identify and develop strategies to meet particular or special needs arising as a result of the employment of a CALD workforce.
- More broadly, develop a program of cultural awareness training for the organisation.
- In reviewing your organisation's human resource management policies, ensure that they incorporate principles of managing for diversity and that they are supportive of the cultural practices of staff.

- ✓ A multicultural agency develops a strategy for the recruitment and training of CALD workers from a variety of community backgrounds, to work as bilingual drug educators in their communities.
- ✓ A metropolitan health service develops an injury prevention program that identifies and trains CALD workers to work as peer educators in their communities.
- ✓ A disability service provider employs a bilingual worker to develop tailored respite options for families from an ethno-specific group.

### Where to go for further information

- Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs at [www.diversityaustralia.gov.au](http://www.diversityaustralia.gov.au)  
Some multicultural partners of the department that undertake organisational training or other workforce enhancement initiatives are listed below. Several private operators also offer specialised cultural training.
- Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities at [www.adec.org.au](http://www.adec.org.au)
- Adult Multicultural Education Services at [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)
- Australian Multicultural Foundation at [www.amf.net.au](http://www.amf.net.au) [Aged Care]
- Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health at [www.ceh.org.au](http://www.ceh.org.au)
- Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues at [www.cmyi.net.au](http://www.cmyi.net.au)
- Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre at [www.fka.com.au](http://www.fka.com.au)
- North East Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre at [www.mrcne.org.au](http://www.mrcne.org.au)
- South East Region Migrant Resource Centre at [www.sermrc.org.au](http://www.sermrc.org.au)
- Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups at (03) 9383 2533
- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture at [www.survivorsvic.org.au](http://www.survivorsvic.org.au)
- Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit at [www.vtputu.org.au](http://www.vtputu.org.au)
- VITS LanguageLink at [www.vits.com.au](http://www.vits.com.au)
- Working Women's Health at [www.workingwomenshealth.asn.au](http://www.workingwomenshealth.asn.au)

## 4. Using language services to best effect



Language services are critical to ensuring equitable access to services for people with low proficiency in English. Timely and effective interpreting and translation services not only improve access to services, they are also vital to improving the quality of the service provided.

Providing language services is especially important in terms of the potential impact on health outcomes for people who are not able to communicate in English. Access to professional language services is vital when people are required to make decisions about their health and welfare, and when essential information is being provided to them to inform their decision making.

The Victorian Government's language services policy is outlined in *Improving the Use of Translations and Interpreting Services - A Guide to Victorian Government Policy and Procedures*.

Employing bilingual workers can be an important means of providing a culturally responsive service, and these workers can assist in certain client contact situations. However, it is necessary to distinguish the role of the bilingual worker from the provision of professional language services, which are an essential component of effective service delivery to people who do not communicate well in English.

### Good examples

- ✓ A regional community service organisation engages a language services provider to train staff in processes to follow in using language services.
- ✓ A metropolitan preschool runs a multilingual information session for parents.
- ✓ An aged care service provider assesses clients for language needs to ensure that interpreters are routinely arranged for client appointments.
- ✓ A metropolitan health service conducts intensive language and cultural awareness staff training programs, developed in conjunction with a community advisory committee and tailored to patient demographics.
- ✓ A disability peak body produces posters in several languages to publicise its services and displays these posters in mainstream health and welfare agencies.

## Key strategies

- Identify language service providers that operate in your area, and ensure that protocols and systems for accessing services are in place.
- Ensure that all staff, including bilingual staff, understand the importance of effective language services and are trained to recognise when they are required and know how to access them. Provide easy access to copies of the Victorian Government's policy and procedures for using translating and interpreting services.
- Consider translating the organisation's most frequently used forms and letters into languages spoken by CALD community members in the service delivery area.
- Ensure that staff are aware of information that has already been translated and is freely available, and that they know how to access and use it. Use the *Health translations on-line directory* as a planning tool for translations and to identify existing resources.
- Develop a planned approach to the use of language services, so that the organisation can anticipate requirements, plan for and monitor expenditure and usage patterns, and evaluate effectiveness.

## Where to go for further information

- Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, containing *Improving the Use of Translating and Interpreting Services: A Guide to Victorian Government Policy and Procedures* available at [www.voma.vic.gov.au](http://www.voma.vic.gov.au) or tel: 9208 3166
- Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators at [www.ausit.org.au](http://www.ausit.org.au)
- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters at [www.naati.com.au](http://www.naati.com.au)
- Multilingual resources are available through the *Health translations on-line directory* at [www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au](http://www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au)
- Better Health Channel provides online information on health and related topics at [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- The department's Funded Agency Channel (accessible to registered users) highlights cultural diversity resources, including some major language service providers in Victoria at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac)



## 5. Encouraging participation in decision making



Developing strategies that involve members of CALD communities in service planning and delivery will assist an organisation to meet the needs of its clients. Effective strategies can operate at the individual level, where a person is actively involved in decisions about their own care or treatment, and at the organisational level, when community representatives are provided with opportunities to participate in a more formal way.

Proactively promoting the participation of members of CALD communities by encouraging nominations for decision making bodies and seeking volunteers for community activities and events, can provide mutual benefits - that is, to both the service delivery organisation and to the communities it serves. These strategies will complement the organisation's efforts to enhance the diversity of its own workforce and to establish appropriate multicultural partnerships.

### Good examples

- ✓ A metropolitan community service organisation provides a dedicated meeting space in the community for informal contact between bilingual staff and clients, to encourage discussion of issues and concerns.
- ✓ A metropolitan council makes special provision in contracts with service providers following advice received from consultations with CALD community groups.
- ✓ A peak body establishes a multicultural taskforce to develop a regular newsletter to inform its constituent organisations of issues and initiatives relevant to CALD clients.
- ✓ A metropolitan health service employs workers from ethno-specific groups to work as advocates for their communities.
- ✓ A primary care partnership establishes a CALD reference group to better support its multicultural and ethno-specific members, to ensure that it attends to the concerns of community groups, and to provide input into formal organisational decision making processes.
- ✓ A rural shire council establishes a multicultural reference group.
- ✓ A community health service holds quarterly meetings with representatives of CALD groups and employs accredited interpreters to assist at the meetings.

## Key strategies

- In reviewing an organisation's planning and policy documents, actively seek out CALD individuals and groups to ensure input from multicultural stakeholders.
- Consider whether the development of ethno-specific communication strategies, such as the use of multicultural media, will assist your organisation in improving the participation of CALD community members.
- Work towards ensuring that the formal decision making processes of the organisation are inclusive of CALD community members.
- Identify and put in place additional supports that CALD community members may require to participate in formal decision making bodies.
- Identify initiatives that actively involve CALD clients in managing their health and wellbeing in order to improve the quality of services provided to them.

## Where to go for further information

- The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society at [www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/\\_inc/publications/charter/charter.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/_inc/publications/charter/charter.htm)
- Useful links for service providers and agencies at [www.immi.gov.au/settle/providers/links.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/providers/links.htm)
- The department's Funded Agency Channel (accessible to registered users) at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac)
- Contact your local Council or migrant resource centre



## 6. Promoting the benefits of a multicultural Victoria



The richness of the multicultural society in which we live and work should be celebrated. There are positive benefits to health and wellbeing arising from promoting and sustaining the diverse cultural backgrounds of those who make up the Victorian community.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to celebrate diversity through special events. At other times it may be appropriate to promote Victoria's multicultural heritage in a more low-key manner or through an enduring initiative. Fostering respect and reciprocity is the key.

### Good examples

- ✓ A rural shire council funds an annual Harmony Day to celebrate the shire's multiculturalism.
- ✓ An ethno-specific women's peak body hosts a celebration day for women from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.
- ✓ A community health service organises transport for elderly ethno-specific clients so they can participate in an annual community festival.
- ✓ A health service provides space for the practice and display of art and craft work of an ethno-specific women's group.
- ✓ A housing redevelopment program in an area with a large CALD community provides land for the establishment of a commemorative garden celebrating the cultural heritage of community members.
- ✓ A community health service provides wall space for the creation of a mural depicting the migration stories of community members.
- ✓ An ethno-specific organisation establishes an annual direct care award in memory of one of its founding directors.

## Key strategies

- Identify specific cultural events in the community that lend themselves to broader community involvement or celebration and identify ways in which the organisation can participate.
- Identify aspects of an organisation's business that lend themselves to broader community involvement and develop specific events to achieve this participation.
- Identify CALD community members and/or staff of CALD backgrounds who can advise on and assist with the development and implementation of promotional activities.
- Seek opportunities to commemorate the contribution of CALD community groups, for example, in naming new cultural, community or sporting facilities.
- Join with other local organisations to promote local cultural groups and activities.
- Identify skills and cultural practices that can be showcased by your organisation. Such opportunities may bring more people through the door, familiarising them with the organisation.

### Where to go for further information

- Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs at [www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/index.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/index.htm)
- Australian Multicultural Foundation at [www.amf.net.au](http://www.amf.net.au)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission at [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au)
- Local government authorities



## Where to go for further information

- Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, containing the *Multicultural Resources Directory 2002-03* at [www.voma.vic.gov.au](http://www.voma.vic.gov.au)
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria [www.eccv.org.au](http://www.eccv.org.au) or the online multicultural services directory at [www.eccv.org.au/db/](http://www.eccv.org.au/db/)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission at [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au)
- The department's Funded Agency Channel (accessible to registered users) which highlights cultural diversity resources, including some key multicultural partners of the department at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/fac)

If you require any further information on the Department of Human Services *Cultural diversity guide* please contact:

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