

**Chapter 6** Local government





## CHAPTER 6: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* was endorsed by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in 1998. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), in conjunction with ALGA, sought contributions from local governments to the Access and Equity annual report in 2005. Thirty local governments provided 100 word snapshots of their activities in responding to the cultural and linguistic diversity of their constituents, compared to 17 local governments providing input 2004. A summary of activities is provided below and a full list of contributing Councils is provided at the end of this chapter.

### EVENTS AND GATHERINGS

In celebrating diversity, building belonging and creating awareness and understanding of diversity at the local level, several Councils provided information about their multicultural events and gatherings. Many of these involved bringing together different local communities and sharing traditional food, dance, history and music. Others, such as the 'Hume Multicultural Planting Festival', part of Council's Greening Programme, brought together Hume's diverse community to celebrate the environment and culture. During the year, Hobart City Council launched an educational kit about cultural festivals celebrated in the Hobart community. Most events involved local community representatives on planning committees and public consultation. The Warrnambool Tarerer Multicultural Festival is set to become an annual event, and Dubbo Council reported strong local community support for its Multicultural Festival:

Activities consisted of numerous food stalls, demonstrations and live performances and jumping castles and activities for younger members of the community were also provided. The event was a huge success with over 1000 people attending on the day. Given that this was Dubbo's first type of activity related to multiculturalism, the committee could not have been happier.

### PARTNERSHIPS

Councils recognised the value of adopting a partnership approach in responding to the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse residents. For example:

- the Hume City Council project involving over 300 partners
- the City of Salisbury project, also incorporating Council areas of Tea Tree Gully, Playford and Gawler, which adopted a partnership model in addressing issues concerning access to Local Government Home and Community Care Services

- a partnership between the City of Greater Geelong and the Geelong Ethnic Communities Council
- the City of Port Phillip Cultural Gateways project
- the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder working closely with Indigenous people to create a better community through specific projects catering for Indigenous needs.

The Banyule City Council provided the following on its project supporting Somali child care providers:

In partnership with other local governments and various service providers, Banyule Council provided support and training for Somali child care providers. Banyule Council initially undertook a research project to better understand the Somali culture and the Muslim faith. They consulted with community leaders and elders to engage them in planning and developing appropriate programmes and resources for the Somali community. This approach has resulted in the establishment of successful partnerships with other local governments and a stronger, more integrated early childhood service system at a local level. Now, over 50 per cent of care providers in Banyule's Family Day Care Scheme are from the Somali community.

## LIVING IN HARMONY

The Living in Harmony programme, an essential element of the Australian Government's multicultural policy, was successfully adopted by a number of local Councils. Wyndham City Council; the City of Stonnington; the Palmerston City Council; Brisbane City Council; City of Canterbury; City of Salisbury; Manningham City Council; and Ipswich City Council all reported Living in Harmony or Harmony Day events and programmes. Both Palmerston and Ipswich City Council projects produced promotional materials to carry the message of harmony to people of all ages around the region.

Ipswich City Council was successful in attracting funding through the DIMIA Living in Harmony initiative. The Ipswich initiative has been implemented through a project working with school students and young people to address prejudice and intolerance, and achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity through two main components. The first was a Poster Exhibition for all students and young people in the Ipswich Region, and the second was a series of Anti-Racism and Creative Workshops within primary and secondary schools to examine and celebrate experiences of diversity. The learning from the school workshops and student participation has been documented in a resource book, the launch of which is a culmination of a twelve month partnership between community members, schools, and Ipswich City Council's Community and Cultural Services, Community, Planning & Development Branch.

## GETTING TO KNOW COUNCIL

Councils employed a range of innovative strategies to facilitate greater access to services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For example:

- tours of Council premises and Residents Kits distributed by Mosman Council
- the Getting to Know Brisbane initiative of Brisbane City Council
- the Community Education Programme delivered by the Holroyd Council in Chinese, Farsi, Arabic, Spanish, Maltese, Hindi and Italian
- the Language Aide Scheme introduced by the Moreland City Council encompassing, among other things, guidelines and procedures on how to use the linguistic and cultural skills of staff to benefit Moreland's diverse community.

Half-day bus tours of local services for newly arrived migrant students were conducted by City of Whittlesea in conjunction with other local service providers.

Newly arrived migrants face numerous barriers in accessing local services including language, lack of transport, lack of confidence, and not knowing what services are available. City of Whittlesea provided two buses, drivers and a tour coordinator who made the students welcome throughout the tour. Students were met at the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE with their teachers and a number of selected services, chosen by the students, were visited. These included: Northern Hospital; Plenty Valley Community Health; Whittlesea Community Connections; and Lalor Library. Short tours and presentations of these services were presented in English to the students and information packages and hospitality exchanged.

## CONSULTATION

A range of initiatives were reported by Councils for ensuring community representation in decision making processes. For example, the Bayside City Council, which held its first Russian Speaking Forum in 2005. Several Councils made reference to the use of Multicultural or Indigenous Advisory Committees and Interfaith Councils, such as the Melville Council, whose committee was established over ten years ago. These committees help inform and advise Councils on issues affecting the well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse community members, and some, such as the Hobson's Bay Multicultural Advisory Group will soon be restructured to ensure ongoing broad and diverse representation. The Canterbury City Council provided the following example:

Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee has been a model strategy in developing innovative responses to cultural diversity. The Committee comprises 16 representatives of key local organisations and seven councillors. Through this Committee, the co-operation between diverse communities and local government has improved dramatically, resulting in highly successful community harmony and other projects. These projects included: Canterbury Inter-Faith Harmony Project; Multicultural Mosaics Programme (a winner of 2005 NSW Local Government Cultural Awards); Canterbury Harmony Days; assistance with multilingual campaigns on new waste services; several reviews of Council Multicultural Policy; and more recently, a proposal to develop a Garden of the World in the City of Canterbury.

## PLANNING AND RESEARCH

Many Councils have formalised their response to diversity through multicultural or cultural diversity plans, policies and strategies or reconciliation plans. For example:

- the Hume City Council, is accountable to its communities through regular reporting on access and equity in its annual *Social Justice Report*
- the City of Greater Dandenong Cultural Diversity Plan is one of six focus areas of Greater Dandenong's Cultural Strategy which aims to build on the cultural vibrancy of Greater Dandenong
- the City of Melbourne is actively involved in promoting and developing innovative responses to meet the needs of its culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and has released its *Multicultural Strategy: 'A City of Opportunity'*.

These planning documents provide frameworks for building strong community relations and have been based on research, including demographic analysis, of local populations and their needs and on consultation with local communities.

The Shire of Campaspe responded to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities firstly by conducting an analysis of the diversity of the Campaspe population. A report was presented to Council that indicated that Campaspe Shire was ranked in the "low range" according to the "Local Government Response to Cultural Diversity in Australia". Only one cultural group that spoke a language other than English was identified with a population greater than 100. However, a further nine other groups resident in the shire were identified with populations less than 100. Council responded to this data with the introduction of a policy to ensure that all front line staff that deal with the public have been trained in dealing with people that speak a language other than English and in how to access and use interpreter services.

## BUILDING CAPACITY

The provision of facilities and practical aids was recognised by a number of Councils as a good way to build capacity in local communities. For example:

- the Ipswich City Council multimedia project helped local communities enhance their media liaison skills to promote increased positive images and to develop community websites
- Manningham City Council provided a free meeting space for senior citizens of major ethnic communities on a weekly basis
- various Councils, including Mosman, provided facilities for English Conversation Groups or similar programmes.

The City of Darebin UN room is an established office space with computers, printer, fax, telephone, desks and storage space to be used by emerging ethnic groups requiring access to office space to undertake their administrative tasks and build their capacity to function independently. The UN room was established in response to identified need in the community for office space from new and emerging groups who are not financially able to access office space. The UN room was designed in consultation with the groups to meet their needs. It is offered along with community grant assistance to meet the costs of stationery, printing, postage and any other administrative cost incurred by the groups.

## ARTS AND CULTURE

Local arts and culture helped numerous Councils foster a sense of belonging and shared local environment for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Wingecarribee Shire Council Foyer Gallery programme profiled works from a local support group for Tibetan refugees and local Aboriginal children and adult artists. The Council also supported cultural teaching in local schools, exhibitions of paintings and artefacts and regular public performances by the local Ngununggula dancers.

The Wyndham City Council photographic exhibition highlighted the activities of various communities in their homes and in the community. The display, including numerous donated pieces, was rotated around community centres, libraries, churches, and schools and was showcased at community events such as Refugee Week and Harmony Day celebrations.

The Council of the City of Mount Gambier is keen to create a 'Memories in a Suitcase' physical monument in the city environment to recognise the contribution that migrants have made to the social, cultural and economic development of Mount Gambier.

Residents from 22 different cultures in the Melville City Council were interviewed and their stories, images and traditional recipes were captured in a book. By recording the contribution that these individuals and their families have made to our multicultural community, the book is a step towards the collection and documentation of our multicultural heritage.

## CONTRIBUTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS

<b>Banyule City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.banyule.vic.gov.au">www.banyule.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Bayside</b>	<a href="http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au">www.bayside.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Brisbane City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au">www.brisbane.qld.gov.au</a>
<b>Shire of Campaspe</b>	<a href="http://www.campaspe.vic.gov.au">www.campaspe.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Canterbury</b>	<a href="http://www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au">www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Darebin</b>	<a href="http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au">www.darebin.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Dubbo City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.dubbo.nsw.gov.au">www.dubbo.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Greater Dandenong</b>	<a href="http://www.greaterdandenong.com">www.greaterdandenong.com</a>
<b>City of Greater Geelong</b>	<a href="http://www.geelongcity.vic.gov.au">www.geelongcity.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Hobart City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.hcc.tas.gov.au">www.hcc.tas.gov.au</a>
<b>Hobsons Bay City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.hobsons.vic.gov.au">www.hobsons.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Holroyd City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.holroyd.nsw.gov.au">www.holroyd.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Hume City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.hume.vic.gov.au">www.hume.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Ipswich City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.ipswich.qld.gov.au">www.ipswich.qld.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder</b>	<a href="http://www.kalbould.wa.gov.au">www.kalbould.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Manningham City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.manningham.vic.gov.au">www.manningham.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Melbourne</b>	<a href="http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au">www.melbourne.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Melville</b>	<a href="http://www.melville.wa.gov.au">www.melville.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Moreland City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au">www.moreland.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Mosman Council</b>	<a href="http://www.mosman.nsw.gov.au">www.mosman.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Mount Gambier</b>	<a href="http://www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au">www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au</a>
<b>Palmerston City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.palmerston.nt.gov.au">www.palmerston.nt.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Port Phillip</b>	<a href="http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au">www.portphillip.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Salisbury</b>	<a href="http://www.salisbury.sa.gov.au">www.salisbury.sa.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Stonnington</b>	<a href="http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au">www.stonnington.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Tea Tree Gully</b>	<a href="http://www.teatreegully.sa.gov.au">www.teatreegully.sa.gov.au</a>
<b>Warrnambool City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au">www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>City of Whittlesea</b>	<a href="http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au">www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Wingecarribee Shire Council</b>	<a href="http://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au">www.wsc.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Wyndham City Council</b>	<a href="http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au">www.wyndham.vic.gov.au</a>