



VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE AFRICAN COMMUNITIES ACTION PLAN

July 2018



ACCESSIBILITY

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About the main symbol: The shape represents the African continent. The large V in the middle of the mark represents Victoria. The intersecting lines represent the many different African cultures and nations that can be found in Victoria.

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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Victoria's African communities have come from more than 50 different nations, bringing with them their unique experiences, skills and ideas.

But like all communities, they also face unique challenges.

It's why the African Ministerial Working Group and community leaders have worked together to analyse and articulate the challenges and opportunities for our African communities.

This work culminated in the *10-year African Communities Action Plan*, developed for Victoria's African communities by Victoria's African communities.

This important plan captures the insights, knowledge and hard work of community members, and provides a way forward in the areas of business, employment, education and training, health and wellbeing, inclusion and empowerment, leadership, cohesion and connection.

I am proud to introduce our response to the plan, which outlines how the Victorian Government will work with communities and other partners on a way forward.

And just as our state's African communities have led the way in finding solutions, so too will they play a crucial role in implementing them.

The journey ahead will be characterised by collaboration – between individuals, communities, governments and others – and I look forward to working alongside our many partners to ensure Victoria's African communities reach their full potential.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Victorians with African heritage are a diverse group of people who make positive contributions to the social and economic life of this state. At the same time, some communities face unique challenges. The African Communities Action Plan, as the voice of communities, proposes a new way forward.

This document outlines what the Victorian Government is doing, and will do, to respond to the African Communities Action Plan, both through funding and existing programs and services.

The Action Plan proposed over 250 actions across six focus areas – business, employment, education and training, health and wellbeing, inclusion and empowerment, and leadership, connection and cohesion.

Due to the extensive scope of these actions, responsibility for implementation rests variously with Commonwealth, state and local governments, private and community sectors, and importantly, communities themselves.

Direct investment

The *Victorian Budget 2018/19* invests **\$8.6 million** to directly respond to the African Communities Action Plan.

Priority response areas

- › **\$3 million** will support three priority response areas – jobs, education and health – identified in the Action Plan and will be developed in partnership with communities.

Approach across the six focus areas

- › **\$5.6 million** will support the design, development and delivery of actions across all six focus areas of the Action Plan. It is important to note the scale of existing government activity and investment, which will be mapped and considered in prioritising and designing actions.

Implementation committee

- › A new implementation committee will be established to oversee the delivery of actions, which are co-designed and have a strong focus on empowerment and leadership. It will also support work to monitor and evaluate progress and build an evidence base.

Building on our existing investment

Building on the Government's existing efforts, we will work to improve the ability of Victorians of African heritage to fully contribute and participate.



A MULTICULTURAL VICTORIA

Victoria is a multicultural success story.

People from all over the world have chosen to make our state their home. They bring with them their experience, their culture and their traditions.

Our citizens come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages and follow 135 different faiths.

Reflecting this diversity, Victoria is home to more than 93,000 people of African background, who come from over 50 countries.

They bring with them their unique experiences, skills and ideas.

But like all communities, our state's African communities also face unique challenges.

1. One law for all

Everyone is equal under the law. All Victorians have the same legal rights, responsibilities and protections.

As Victorians, we all have rights and responsibilities under the law and towards each other. By respecting our mutual rights and responsibilities, we can ensure a safe and cohesive society.

Victorian Values Statement

4. A fair go for all

Everyone deserves a fair go in life. That means giving every Victorian – no matter where they live, their circumstances, or their background – the support they need to enjoy the Victorian way of life. These include quality education and healthcare, accessible transport, opportunities in employment and a safe place to live.

In acknowledging these challenges, the Government's response to the Action Plan sits squarely within Victoria's approach to multicultural affairs.

It is therefore critical that the implementation of this response also remains within the overarching frameworks that have made Victoria's multicultural society a success.

This plan will support Victoria's African communities to make an even stronger contribution to our state through participation and belonging.

2. Freedom to be yourself

Everyone is free to be themselves and to feel safe in being true to themselves. The Government wants every Victorian to be able to celebrate their culture with pride and practice their traditions in peace.

The freedom to be yourself includes freedom of speech, expressions of gender, sexuality and religion, and peaceful assembly; it does not allow people to break the law or to impinge on the safety or freedom of others.

3. Discrimination is never acceptable

Everyone has a responsibility to promote inclusion and participation and to reject exclusion, racism and all forms of violence. A society free of discrimination is better able to tackle problems like economic and social disengagement and improve health and wellbeing for all.

5. It is up to all of us to contribute to a Victoria we can be proud of

We all want similar things – the opportunity to thrive, for our successes to be recognised, and for our families and loved ones to be safe, secure and happy.

Accepting these values is not difficult. Acceptance of our shared values is expressed in the everyday – through your contributions at home, at work, in the community and through volunteering.

The Victorian Values Statement

In February 2017, the Victorian Government released *Victorian. And proud of it.* – our new Multicultural Policy Statement. The Statement outlines the Government’s approach to multiculturalism and its unequivocal commitment to building a strong and cohesive society.

At the heart of *Victorian. And proud of it.* is the Victorian Values Statement.

It clearly sets out the core values that unify us as a peaceful and prosperous society with a shared sense of belonging, respect, acceptance and contribution.

The Victorian Values Statement makes clear the rights and responsibilities we all share.

These values are not negotiable – they are what we expect of every Victorian and what every Victorian should expect of each other.

These are the values that make Victoria a great place to live – and a place we can all be proud of.

Our discussions about diversity are underpinned by the understanding that every Victorian has:

- › A duty to respect and uphold the laws and values of the state
- › A right to belong and contribute, and
- › A responsibility to let others live as they choose.

Supporting the Multicultural Policy Statement is the Victorian Whole-of-Government Multicultural Affairs Outcomes Framework, which aims to drive concrete improvements to ensure that every Victorian can belong, contribute, achieve and succeed.

The Action Plan is aligned closely with the outcomes articulated in the framework:

- › Victorians are safe and secure
- › Victorians are healthy and well
- › Victorians are able to fully participate
- › Victorians are connected to culture and community, and
- › Victorians have equal rights and responsibilities.



THE STORY OF CELESTINE – ACHIEVING THROUGH GRIT AND SELF-BELIEF



Celestine, 22, was nine when she moved to Australia from Guinea with her mum – a single parent – and her siblings on a humanitarian visa. After settling in North Geelong, Celestine experienced culture shock, with no English and no community ties. Now, 13 years later, Celestine is a youth leader, has finished a Bachelor of Psychological Science and has dreams of becoming a social worker and inspiring children to achieve.

Despite her struggles, Celestine focuses on what is possible. She says her favourite thing is criticism, “I love learning what I’ve done wrong and working hard to improve”.

Her mum – who left school when she was only eight – has always been a strong supporter of Celestine getting a good education. After six months of English classes, Celestine was enrolled into primary school. Along the way, she’s been given support and encouragement to achieve by Heather and John, volunteers through Diversitat’s home tutor scheme, who visited her every week for years.

With their encouragement in 2013, Celestine was the first girl in the Guinean/ Liberian community in Geelong to finish high school. Like her mum, who works two jobs, Celestine worked to support herself during high school and since starting university, has worked two jobs as a disability youth carer.

“There’s no shame in asking for help but people also need to put in the effort. You cannot force people to improve themselves, they need to help themselves.”

Celestine has enrolled in a Masters of Social Work through which she can continue to help others. She says, “there’s no shame in asking for help but people also need to put in the effort. You cannot force people to improve themselves, they need to help themselves.”

She’s also a strong supporter of talking openly about the real issues that people experience, like depression, mental illness and abuse in relationships.

Celestine says that there’s nothing really special about her. But it’s her positive approach to life, resilience and drive to follow her dreams that sets her apart.

Now, Celestine is a positive force in her community. In 2016, she was elected the youth leader for the Geelong Liberian community and runs activities for around 25 children and young people. Aside from travelling, Celestine’s dream is to open a dance studio for local kids – it’s what makes them happy.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Action Plan proposed working together now and over the long term to create opportunities, strengthen outcomes and build inclusive communities.

In support of this, the Victorian Government has committed **\$8.6 million** to respond to the Action Plan.

The Victorian Government's Priority Response Areas

Of the total investment of \$8.6 million, \$3 million will support three areas of priority – jobs, education and health.

The Government is investing in these areas as a priority because they have been consistently raised as critical for African communities. They are also catalysts for wider change – improving outcomes in these areas will improve broader participation and belonging.

The Action Plan says

"Better connect people across communities with employment support programs, such as through a network of African Victorian liaison officers linked to funded services"

The Action Plan says

"Increase support to local homework clubs to ensure they are viable and benefit young people"

"Improve families' connections to school through community-led initiatives... such as community liaison or outreach officers"

The Action Plan says

"Support and increase access to quality and culturally appropriate therapeutic programs, such as for young people who struggle with substance abuse and/or mental illnesses"

Jobs

\$1 million will help high-need Victorians of African heritage find a job. Combined with a \$1.15 million contribution from Jobs Victoria, total funding of \$2.15 million will be allocated to further boost support from Jobs Victoria for job seekers with African heritage.

Education

\$1.5 million will support the education outcomes of young people and their communities through increased support for homework clubs and more school-community liaison officers. These initiatives will better engage students and their families with school, and ensure those students who need extra help with their studies can get it.

Health

\$500,000 will support working with communities and service providers to develop and deliver programs that respond to drug and alcohol misuse in areas of high-need across the state.

Approach to the Action Plan's six focus areas

Of the total investment, a further \$5.6 million will support the delivery of proposed actions across the broader six focus areas.

The Victorian Government will work with communities and other partners to prioritise this work through a new implementation committee.

At the centre of the Victorian Government's approach will be genuine consultation and co-design with communities, and ensuring a strong focus on community empowerment and leadership. The new implementation committee will oversee the progress of initiatives, consistent with the Whole-of-Government Multicultural Affairs Outcomes Framework, to measure success against key indicators such as educational attainment and employment outcomes.

Building on our existing investment

Separate to new funding for the Action Plan, the Government has and continues to invest in programs and services that lead to better jobs, education, and health and wellbeing outcomes. These investments are directed towards universal services that are accessible to all Victorians, as well as to specialist services that meet specific needs

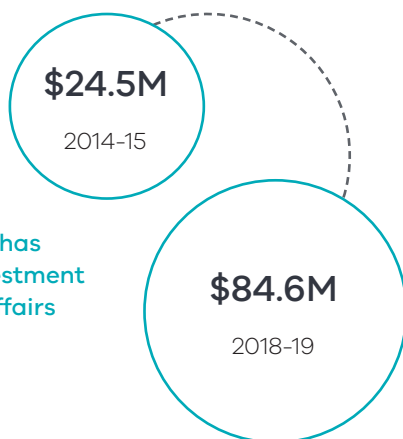
Building on what the Government is already doing, we will work to improve the ability of Victorians with African heritage to access these services.



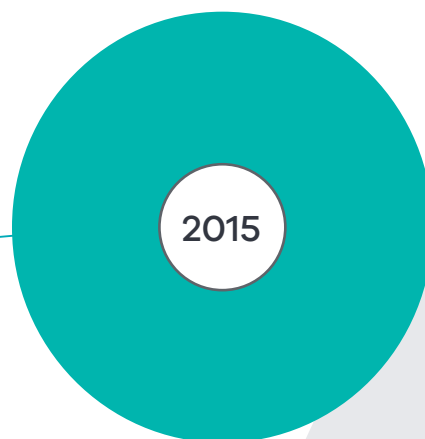
RESPONSE TO THE AFRICAN COMMUNITIES ACTION PLAN: BUILDING ON VICTORIA'S EXISTING INVESTMENT

Across all portfolios, the Government invests to support the participation and contribution of all Victorians, including from culturally diverse communities

The Government has increased its investment in Multicultural Affairs



- › Endorsed **National Settlement Framework**, a blueprint for Commonwealth, State and local government engagement
- › Created first **Social Cohesion and Community Resilience Ministerial Taskforce** (\$25m)
- › Delivered **pre-accredited training** to 18,710 people of culturally diverse backgrounds (\$17.8m)
- › Continued supporting vulnerable women of refugee background, such as through **Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies** (\$2.55m)



WHAT WE HAVE DONE ACROSS PORTFOLIOS

- › Continued support to **English as a Second Language** programs (\$109m)
- › Created **New and Emerging Community Leadership Program** (\$800,000 over four years)

- › Released Victorian. **And Proud of It – Victoria’s Multicultural Policy Statement.**
- › Launched **JobsBank** with a focus on helping disadvantaged job seekers, including those from diverse backgrounds (\$5m)
- › Launched the **Multicultural Sports Fund** (\$4m over four years) to boost participation and inclusion through sport
- › **Expanded health support** to people from a refugee background (\$10.9m)
- › Boosted **family violence prevention and response** among culturally diverse communities (\$47.8m)
- › Funded the **Social Cohesion Partnership Project** (\$460,000) for projects between Victoria Police and communities
- › Launched **Youth Crime Prevention Grants** (\$10m) to support young people at risk, including those from diverse communities
- › Expanded support through **Cradle to Kinder** to vulnerable women and children from diverse backgrounds (\$19m)

2016

- › Boosted support for jobseekers, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds, through the **Jobs Victoria Employment Network** (\$53m)
- › Established the **African Ministerial Working Group**
- › Launched the **Recruit Smarter** pilot to address unconscious bias in recruitment practices
- › Launched a **Small Business Victoria workshop** to support people from culturally diverse communities starting a small business

2017

2018

- › Launched the **Flemington community revitalisation initiative** to help housing estate residents find a job, including residents from culturally diverse backgrounds
- › Released **African Communities Action Plan**
- › Invested **\$17.9m to teach kids a second language in kinders** across the state, the first time in Australia that state kinders will be funded to provide language programs

THE STORY OF FRANCOISE – FOLLOWING HER LEADERSHIP JOURNEY



Francoise left Rwanda with her husband and oldest son in 2011, initially moving to Queensland and then settling in Victoria. Francoise is now pursuing an Executive career in banking and is employed by ANZ. While loving her role, getting there wasn't easy.

Initially life was challenging. Francoise was home alone for much of the day, with her youngest being born here. She felt her English was not good enough and this made it hard to meet people and do basic things like the shopping. At first, she felt isolated with no networks or friends.

Determined to break through, Francoise discovered her local library and began English classes. Already fluent in five languages, she soon started giving her own time as an English teacher to other new migrants. While volunteering, Francoise became aware that the organisation needed help with accounting and offered to do the finances herself. This, in time, led to a paid position.

In 2017, Francoise was part of Leadership Victoria's African Leadership Development Program (ALDP). Francoise had already made some significant strides in her leadership journey. But, still, she said the program transformed the way she engaged with the community, "I am different now. I feel empowered to act and use the language. I have influencing skills to make a difference."

In her local community in Melbourne's inner west, Francoise knows there are many new migrants who continue to feel isolated and scared. Her advice to others? "Get out of the house, be brave and talk to people. Explore your community services. Try something new – if it doesn't work try again."

Programs such as ALDP have helped Francoise to make strong connections and given her extra confidence to do more. Now, Francoise has joined up with a fellow ALDP participant to start running Saturday workshops for women in financial literacy. They want to help build their confidence in budgeting and understanding often complex financial products.

Today, Australia is home for Francoise and her family. And Francoise is determined to make the most of life here and continue her leadership journey, "I want to show my daughter and others that women of colour can do it. We can make it to the top roles in business and we make a big impact in the community on the way."

Get out of the house, be brave and talk to people. Explore your community services. Try something new – if it doesn't work try again.

THE ACTION PLAN'S FOCUS AREAS: BUILDING ON THE GOVERNMENT'S EXISTING INVESTMENT

In addition to the new \$8.6 million investment, the Government has been working to support and engage African communities in ways that span across the six focus areas.

Much work has already occurred and this work will continue into the future.

What we are doing

The work undertaken through the implementation committee will build on the Government's existing efforts.

The Government is already working to support many of the outcomes in the six focus areas through its existing investment in Victoria's diverse communities.

Examples of this existing work are set out in the 'What we are doing' sections.

What we will do

The Government will build on its existing and broader investment in multicultural communities, including African communities, to support actions across all six focus areas of the Action Plan.

A key focus of this work will be improving access to, and the responsiveness of, universal services available to all Victorians, as well as services designed to meet the needs of specific groups.

Examples of this future work are set out in the 'What we will do' sections.

BUSINESS

Issues raised in the Action Plan

With more business, social enterprise, and entrepreneurial training and opportunities, people can establish and grow profitable businesses. Self-reliance and independence can be supported by facilitating stronger partnerships between successful business owners and organisations, and prospective or new business owners. Partnerships between communities and industry and business can also be established and strengthened.

What we are doing

- › Boosting opportunities for all Victorians to design, launch and grow viable and innovative businesses, and increasing access to government procurement and long-term projects through a range of Small Business Victoria initiatives, including:
 - › small business workshops and mentoring
 - › the inclusion of culturally diverse events in the 2018 Small Business Festival, and
 - › changes to the Business Victoria website and social channels to strengthen entrepreneurial culture and the business experience.
- › Tackling unconscious bias in workplace recruitment through the cross-sector Recruit Smarter pilot.
- › Supporting Victoria's Social Enterprise Sector through the implementation of the Social Enterprise Strategy, which seeks to increase innovation, build business capacity and skills, and improve market access.

What we will do

- › Continue to provide opportunities to increase the economic participation of Victorians, including those of African heritage, through business ownership.
- › Support business capability and skills development through Small Business Victoria's business support programs, including workshops and mentoring.
- › Create a new Social Enterprise Network that supports emerging leaders, provides peer learning and mentoring, and builds capacity and sustainability for social enterprises and the sector.



EMPLOYMENT

Issues raised in the Action Plan

Many Victorians with African background have strong skills and qualifications, but are struggling to access job opportunities. They are seeking support to realise their career aspirations and find good, secure jobs across all sectors. Some people are particularly struggling to find employment and are feeling hopeless. With better outreach and a more holistic approach, we can respond and address barriers linked to unemployment.

What we are doing

- › Supporting every Victorian to get the right skills and knowledge to gain employment in their field of interest.
- › Improving employment outcomes for Victorians of African heritage through:
 - › access to state-wide Jobs Victoria programs, such as Work and Learning Centres, JobsBank and the Jobs Victoria Employment Network
 - › four Jobs Victoria community revitalisation initiatives, including Flemington, are increasing local job opportunities and improving education participation and outcomes, and

- › work experience for disadvantaged Victorians, including those of culturally diverse backgrounds, through the Corporate Social Inclusion Partnership program, and the Major Projects Skills Guarantee.

What we will do

- › Continue to build on the success of Jobs Victoria and boost the numbers of culturally diverse job seekers accessing these services and finding a job.
- › Engage communities and partners from other sectors in co-design activities to increase knowledge and uptake of employment support services.
- › Link young people and families engaging in the new Community Support Groups with employment providers.
- › Look to establish more community revitalisation initiatives that support microbusiness development.
- › Continue to recruit Victorians of African heritage as qualified interpreters in African languages where there is a shortage in the Interpreter Scholarship program.
- › Allocate \$1.15 million to support a new outreach model to help connect more jobseekers of African heritage to Jobs Victoria services. As a further boost, \$1 million will go towards a partnership initiative between Jobs Victoria partners and African community organisations.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Issues raised in the Action Plan

Like every Victorian family, families in our African communities want to make sure their kids can reach their full potential. Supporting parents in their children's learning and development is fundamental to improving education outcomes. Development of life skills, particularly problem solving and resilience, across all ages and improving English language proficiency is also critical.

What we are doing

- › Record investments in our schools is helping to make sure that every Victorian student has every opportunity.
- › Giving Victorian children, young people and adults the support they need to actively engage in and feel connected to their place of learning.
- › Providing intensive English language programs through language schools and centres that also support students' transition to mainstream schools.
- › Supporting disengaged young Victorians in eight regional and metropolitan areas back into education through the Navigator Pilot Program.
- › Supporting young people to develop life skills, and connecting people with job opportunities through:
 - › Learn Locals that provide pre-accredited learning specifically tailored to the needs of local people in their local communities, and

- › Skills First Workforce Training Innovation Fund and Regional and Specialist Training Fund to improve the quality of training across the state.
- › Working with schools, including through a new Principals' Roundtable, to identify new opportunities to engage with students of African heritage.

What we will do

- › Link young people and families engaging with the new Community Support Groups with education and training providers.
- › Hold information forums for families from culturally diverse communities about the Victorian public education system.
- › Invest \$1.5 million to co-design and implement initiatives that engage and retain students, such as combined sport and homework clubs.
- › Invest \$500,000 to work with schools and students to prevent bullying and promote the value of diversity.
- › Invest \$805,000 to develop extra tools and resources to help teachers work with students from every background.
- › Help children in preschool to Year 4 who are developing their English skills, by developing Early Literacy Readers which include mother tongues like Somali, Dinka, Dari and Tigrinya.
- › Continue and expand the Navigator program state-wide, including an extra \$405,000 to support priority groups in areas of high need.
- › Help Victorian students access workplace learning opportunities through a new \$820,000 Industry Immersion program, targeting those students who have limited connections with businesses and different types of jobs.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Issues raised in the Action Plan

The health of our state depends on the health of its people. In our African communities, critical health services are not being accessed by people of all ages as much as they could be. Services also need to be responsive to the circumstances and cultural differences of all Victorians, including those with African heritage. More people within our African communities want the resources, training and skills to support others within their community that need help.

What we are doing

- › Record investments in our state's hospitals and healthcare.
- › Making sure all Victorians are safe, and have good health and quality of life, through programs such as:
 - › the biggest ever boost to mental health support, and
 - › funding to address family violence, including programs to target its root causes.
- › Providing targeted funding to support community health and wellbeing initiatives, such as:
 - › Community Partnerships for Primary Prevention grants
 - › \$4 million in the Multicultural Sports Fund to promote participation and belonging, and
 - › the Mental Health Grants Program for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people.

- › Services that are accessible to Victorians who need extra support, including through:
 - › Early Parenting Centres that provide intensive parenting support for families to ensure infant health and wellbeing, and
 - › Child and Family Services that provide children and families with support and interventions that ensure the safety and wellbeing of our youngest Victorians.
- › Working to respond to and prevent family violence by:
 - › establishing 17 Support and Safety Hubs across the state to respond to family violence and provide accessible services to keep victims safe, including those from multicultural communities
 - › working to prevent family violence and intervene early through a range of initiatives under *Free from Violence: Victoria's Prevention Strategy*, including projects with African communities in locations where the need is greatest, and
 - › developing and delivering diversity training for specialist family violence and universal services workforces to build their capacity to recognise and respond to all victim survivors of family violence.
- › Investing \$10.9 million to expand specialised health support to people of a refugee background, including through:
 - › community nursing support
 - › paediatric care, and
 - › catch up immunisation.

What we will do

- › Improve health outcomes by ensuring programs for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, such as Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies, are more widely known about and more accessible among the communities that need support.
- › Work to strengthen safety and inclusiveness for diverse communities in the Child and Family Services system.
- › Better support the health and wellbeing needs of families and communities by working to expand specialist services in priority areas, such as parenting.
- › In partnership with communities, design and implement services to engage and support young people and their families, including through the new pilot Community Support Groups that will offer parenting programs, access to youth mentoring, as well as direct support from youth workers and other services.

INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

Issues raised in the Action Plan

Victorians of all circumstances and backgrounds should be able to participate and belong. Communities and governments need to connect with, and understand, the needs of their people. By working more closely with people experiencing need, we can make services more responsive and effective.

What we are doing

- › Giving all Victorians, of all identities and circumstances, equal opportunity to participate and contribute through initiatives, such as:
 - › investments in disability access and advocacy, including the State Disability Plan.
 - › addressing inequality for women through the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy.
 - › the Refugee Minor Program, funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, which supports children and young people of refugee background, including from Africa, who arrive in Australia without a parent or guardian.

- › Investing \$380,000 for 10 new supported playgroups for families from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- › Continuing to support Himilo Community Connect, a Community Support Group established in 2016 to engage with Somali young people.
- › Boosting funding to the South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria and the Centre for Multicultural Youth to engage with South Sudanese young people.
- › Investing in prevention, including engaging children and young people at risk of, or in contact with, the justice system including through the Youth Support Service or participation in Youth Crime Prevention initiatives.
- › Supporting at-risk teenagers from culturally diverse backgrounds through the KopKoda initiative with Victoria Police.

What we will do

- › Make services for all Victorians more accessible and responsive and design tailored approaches to respond to the needs of specific groups, such as:
 - › Preventing reoffending through programs including mentoring for young people in custody
 - › family support packages to increase engagement through a range of activities including sport and recreation
 - › new youth alcohol and drug treatment services, and
 - › extra youth workers to support and engage young people.
- › Support new and innovative approaches to promoting cohesion and connection, including through Creative Victoria's Future Makers for Change, which includes projects that engage young people of African descent.

LEADERSHIP, COHESION AND CONNECTION

Issues raised in the Action Plan

The clear message from the development of the African Communities Action Plan is that Victorians with African heritage want to contribute to our state. There is also a strong desire to remain connected to family, community and culture. By identifying and nurturing current and future leaders, we can make our communities and our state even stronger.

What we are doing

- › Supporting cohesion within our communities and developing the potential of emerging leaders, through:
 - › \$2.3 million for a Rights and Responsibilities program under the *Victorian. And proud of it.* Multicultural Policy Statement
 - › annual grant funding for activities that build capacity, participation and community harmony, and for multicultural festivals and events
 - › \$1 million to develop a whole-of-government anti-racism plan, and
 - › leadership programs, including the African Development Leadership Program, which has supported 122 emerging leaders since 2014.
- › Building community capacity and supporting the delivery of community-led activities in areas such as parenting, education and youth justice through the South Sudanese Partnership Fund.
- › Supporting young people of African heritage to lead, including through the Youth Summit and Multicultural Youth Network.

- › Strengthening partnerships between Victoria Police and local communities through collaborative projects delivered under the Social Cohesion Partnership Program.
- › Developing strong, effective and proactive responses to anti-social behaviour and youth offending through the African Australian Community Taskforce, supported by Victoria Police.

What we will do

- › Help communities lead and deliver projects that meet community need, including through:
 - › \$5.54 million for three new pilot Community Support Groups that will employ local people from local communities, with a focus on education, training and contribution
 - › \$600,000 to deliver projects that promote participation and belonging for young Victorians, and
 - › targeted funding of \$500,000 to build the capacity of community organisations in meeting the needs of vulnerable people.
- › Work with communities to improve diversity on Victorian Government boards.

APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

The Victorian Government recognises the commitment of many Victorians with African heritage to participating and contributing to our society.



Community members have affirmed that achieving the vision of the Action Plan – *to create inclusive communities, improve outcomes and create sustainable opportunities* – will depend on four underlying principles:

- › creating new **partnerships** and strengthening existing ones
- › using **strengths** and talents of communities to deliver solutions
- › being **accountable** to and engaging people across communities on progress, and
- › creating **lasting change**.

Partnerships for delivery

We will work with communities to support the implementation of the Victorian Government's response to the African Communities Action Plan.

At the same time, we acknowledge that some actions need to be led from within communities – while some actions will fall within the responsibility of other tiers of government.

Additionally, some actions will require the investment and collaboration of partners across the civil, private, academic and philanthropic sectors.

To support this partnerships approach, we will establish an **implementation committee** through an open process that ensures a balanced membership by expertise, gender, age and ethnicity.

The implementation committee will prioritise the areas of focus, monitor progress and outcomes and provide advice to the Victorian Government.

Commitment to promoting equality

As its response to the Action Plan is implemented, the Government will promote equality in all its forms and across actions. Gender equality is fundamental.

The Victorian Values Statement acknowledges that women and girls from diverse communities often face additional barriers to education, employment and good health and wellbeing.

These barriers can result from factors such as language, defined gender roles, discrimination, and separation from family and other support networks. Women from diverse backgrounds are also often overrepresented in insecure and low paid work.

Some of these issues will continue to be addressed through Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy, *Safe and Strong*.

THE STORY OF CHERNET – FINDING A PATHWAY FOR THE FUTURE



Twenty-year-old Chernet arrived in Australia as a refugee from Ethiopia in 2008.

A young man living in the Flemington flats, he had dropped out of his pre-apprenticeship as an electrician because he wasn't able to pay for the remainder of his studies.

Chernet had only ever found casual work since leaving secondary school. He registered with the Jobs Victoria Employment Network at the Brotherhood of St Laurence's *Given the Chance – Flemington program* because he was looking for help to find a long-term job.

After talking with Chernet about his career aspirations, the Brotherhood of St Laurence got him an interview with a new employer in the area, Schultz Building Group. They also helped Chernet to update his resume and practice interviewing.

Since being given a second chance by the Schultz Group, Chernet is now working with them in a general labouring role on a residential building site.

This role is giving him the experience that he needs to follow his dream of becoming an electrician.

Brotherhood of St Laurence also signed him up with its SaverPlus, a partnership with ANZ, for their financial literacy and savings matching program. This program has the potential to provide Chernet with a scholarship to complete his pre-apprenticeship as an electrician and find him an employer for his apprenticeship.



