

Victorian Multicultural Review

Victorian Government’s initial response and strong, immediate actions

We must not let global events divide us as a multicultural, multifaith community, otherwise we play into the hands of those agents of intolerance and terror – such as white supremacists – who want to destroy all our multicultural communities.

– George Lekakis AO, Victorian Multicultural Review

The Victorian Multicultural Review (the Review) heard from more than 640 Victorians at 57 consultation sessions, plus more than 150 peak bodies and community groups.

It has made a range of recommendations to support multicultural organisations to help lead a united Victoria.

The Government thanks the Review lead Mr George Lekakis AO and the members of the advisory group – Hass Dellal AO, Carmel Guerra OAM, Miriam Suss OAM and Mark Duckworth PSM – for their comprehensive work.

The Review found that recent challenges including COVID-19, the rising cost-of living, and conflict overseas have contributed to an erosion of trust in institutions and governments and led to disillusionment and isolation.

As a result, more individuals are turning to multicultural organisations for leadership, support and services. But Victoria’s old and proud multicultural institutions and policies haven’t caught up with these changing needs.

The rebuild starts today. The Victorian Government is committing to a series of strong, immediate actions as part of its initial response to the Review.

Multicultural Victoria

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) is a valued and long-standing organisation, but the Review found that its unwieldy structure and largely ceremonial role is not strong or elevated enough.

A new statutory organisation – Multicultural Victoria – will take its place with an expanded remit, and its independent Chair – the Multicultural Coordinator General – will take on the emerging challenges faced by multicultural communities.

Multicultural Victoria will be enshrined in legislation and combine the current community engagement functions of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) with the departmental policy, grant and program delivery functions of Multicultural Affairs.

Unified, coordinated leadership is its rationale and a united Victoria is its goal.

The Coordinator General will provide an independent voice into Government and be supported by two Deputies (including one from regional Victoria) plus a five-member advisory council.

As the Government was told clearly through the Review, its leadership must reflect Victoria’s diversity, powered by sector expertise, and committed to neutrality – so it can speak for all communities.

The Government will support the VMC to undertake its core functions during the interim period while an amendment to the Multicultural Victoria Act is drafted and appointments to the new body are considered.

Whole-of-government approach

The job of rebuilding won’t be left to one organisation. It’s a whole-of-government effort, and it will be matched with a new whole-of-government multicultural strategy to be led by the Premier and delivered in 2026.

This new four-year strategy will elevate multicultural needs across government, and consider and deliver the remaining recommendations of the Review in an integrated way.

The Multicultural Affairs annual reporting process will also be redesigned to ensure genuine community engagement.

The Cabinet will also be accountable, with Cabinet decision-making to be required to consider an impact statement that addresses multicultural inclusion and social cohesion – as recommended by the Review.

Shared values

In December 2024, the Government proposed that a simple and universal set of Victorian values should be guaranteed by organisations who are applying for grants in the Multicultural Affairs portfolio.

The Review supported this concept but strongly recommended that it shouldn’t just apply to multicultural grants. The Government accepts this advice.

The new Social Cohesion Commitment as part of the Victorian Values Statement will be rolled out across all grants that use Victorian Common Funding Agreements – with multicultural grant recipients piloting the reform to show they are leading the way.

The Commitment will apply at the point of organisations seeking funding and its short, universal text will be based on the Victorian Values Statement which was co-designed with multicultural communities.

It will say that everyone is free to be themselves, and everyone has the responsibility to reject exclusion, racism and violence.

It is not designed to be a punitive instrument. It is designed to set a standard. If a recipient fails this basic standard, they could be required to rectify it, apologise, make internal changes, or even forego the grant.

More support for community organisations

Above all, the Review heard that community groups need more support, and government needs strong, stable partners for social cohesion.

The Government will deliver a new capacity-building fund to boost the strength of multicultural and peak organisations – to help them lead from the front.

Building understanding and respect

Museums display more than artefacts – they are places of understanding and respect. But visitation to Victoria’s many multicultural museums is declining at a critical point in time.

An additional investment of \$925,000 will support more Victorians, including schoolchildren, to visit the Holocaust Museum, Islamic Museum, Chinese Museum, Jewish Museum, and more – so more Victorians get to know and understand the multicultural stories at the heart of our state.

Essential services for multicultural people

The Review also heard concerns about translating and interpreting services for Victorians, who together speak more than 200 languages.

The Government will formally recognise language services as an ‘essential service’ for multicultural communities – with more work to come to ensure its quality and sustainability.

Recommendations

These actions directly respond to nine key recommendations of the Review, with further work and consideration of remaining recommendations to come through the delivery of an integrated, whole-of-government multicultural strategy.

Both the full release of this Review’s report and Government’s immediate actions are, above all, a chance to rebuild trust, re-engage with communities, and reset the multicultural agenda with a shared vision of a united Victoria.