

CULTURAL DIVERSITY POLICY 2015 - 2019

City of Stonnington

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1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Stonnington is a culturally diverse city with residents from 143 countries who speak 108 different languages. This rich diversity is what makes our city a great place to live, supported by Council's commitment to creating a connected community that fosters the hopes, wellbeing and aspirations of all people and recognise that all persons have equal rights in the provision of and access to services and facilities.

The Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 is guided by the principles of multiculturalism enshrined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* which acknowledges that individuals come from diverse backgrounds and are entitled to mutual respect and understanding and to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the community.

Underpinning the Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 is a human rights based approach to community engagement and service delivery, which embraces participation, accountability and non-discrimination.

The development of this Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 follows Council's long tradition of adopting multicultural policies and plans and builds upon the achievements of Council's *Cultural Diversity Policy 2010-2014*.

2. COUNCIL'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY POLICY

Arising from the research and consultation, which has been undertaken in the development of the Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019, Council has clarified its policy in relation to cultural diversity.

'Council recognises and respects that everyone has the same human rights entitlement to allow them to participate in and contribute to society and our community.... and recognises that all persons have equal rights in the provision of and access to services and facilities.'

City of Stonnington Council Plan 2013–2017, P 4

The Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 embraces:

- Participation—Council will ensure that the community and service users have the opportunity to participate in decisions that directly affect their lives and will promote social and economic participation through community capacity building and intercultural interaction.
- Accountability—Council will remain accountable to its community through organisational competence, ongoing dialogue, accessible information provision, inclusive decision-making and regular review of its processes.
- Non-discrimination—Council recognises that some groups experience greater barriers to participation and will strive to make services more accessible to these groups. Council will also promote mutual obligation by all members of the community to achieving social cohesion.
- Empowerment—Council will work to empower its community through the promotion of civic accessibility and responsibility. Council recognises that the preservation of cultural heritage and support for the aspirations of community members are critical features of empowered communities.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 is to:

- Provide a profile of Stonnington's culturally diverse community
- Provide a strategic framework for a whole of organisation approach to culturally responsive service planning and provision
- Detail specific actions to achieve Council's vision for a culturally diverse community

4. AIMS

The aims of the Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 are to ensure Council:

- Effectively engages and communicates with our culturally diverse residents
- Plans and delivers culturally responsive services, facilities and programs
- Works collaboratively with others to reduce barriers experienced by culturally diverse residents
- Develops the capacity of our workforce to enhance the ways we engage, communicate and consult with our diverse communities

5. METHODOLOGY

The development of the Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019 is the result of a collaborative process between Council staff, the Stonnington Ethnic Services Committee, key service providers and the Inner Southern Multicultural Issues Network. The process has involved:

- Evaluating the *Cultural Diversity Policy 2010-2014*
- Analysing the 2011 Census data to understand demographic changes in our community
- Reviewing Australian and Victorian government literature
- Consulting with Council staff, the Stonnington Ethnic Services Committee, key service providers and the Inner South Multicultural Issues Network through workshops and surveys

6. THE POLICY CONTEXT

A review of relevant local, Victorian and Australian Acts, policies and statements has informed the development of the Cultural Diversity Policy 2015-2019. The relevance of these documents is summarised below.

City of Stonnington

The *Council Plan 2013-2017* is the document that outlines Council's vision for a connected community that fosters the hopes, wellbeing and aspirations of all people. The Plan outlines how Council will meet the most important needs with strategies to deliver quality outcomes for the community.

The *Municipal Public Health Plan 2013-2017* aims to achieve maximum levels of health and wellbeing by identifying and assessing the actual and potential public health issues affecting the community and outlining strategies to prevent or minimise them. Five key health pillars have been identified: Active and Healthy Lifestyle, Alcohol and Tobacco,

Health Equity, Mental Health and Community Safety and linked to each is a range of strategies to be implemented over the next four years.

The following Council Plans and Policies recognise the diversity of the Stonnington Community and have been used as a reference in the development of this policy: Youth Strategy 2010-2014, Access and Inclusion Plan 2014-2017, Older Persons Strategy 2008, Arts and Cultural Strategy 2011-2015, Recreation Strategy 2014-2024 and the Reconciliation Action Plan 2012-2016.

Local Government

The *Local Government Act 1989* specifies the role and objectives of local government. It states that a council must act 'to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community; and to ensure that services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable'. Further, the role of Council includes 'acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making; and fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.'

Victorian Government

The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* is the framework for a whole of government approach to building a cohesive, culturally diverse community. The Act establishes the principles of multiculturalism, which recognises that all Victorians come from diverse backgrounds and are entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the community.

The objectives of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* are to:

- Promote everyone's right to equal opportunity
- Eliminate as far as possible discrimination and sexual harassment
- Provide redress for people whose rights have been breached
- Empower the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to enter into enforceable undertakings where systemic discrimination exists within organisations

The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* enshrines civil and political rights, and some cultural rights into Victorian law. Victoria is the first Australian state to enact formal protection of human rights by introducing a Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The Charter ensures human rights are valued and protected within government and the community.

The *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* prohibits public behaviour that incites hatred against, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of another person or group of people because of their race or religion. The Act provides a community standard about our responsibility towards each other in a multicultural society. It seeks to ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their particular race or religion, and do not become targets of vilifying behaviour.

Australian Government

The *People of Australia – Australia's Multicultural Policy 2011* aims to strengthen social cohesion through promoting belonging, respecting diversity and fostering engagement with Australian values, identity and citizenship, within the framework of Australian law.

The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* formerly called the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now known as the Australian Human Rights Commission) and defines discrimination and lists grounds that constitute discrimination under the Act.

The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* gives effect to Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Its major objectives are to

- Promote equality before the law for all persons, regardless of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin
- Make discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful.

7. OUR CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Where were we born?

Nearly 30% of us were born overseas, and 20.3% were born in non-English speaking countries. The largest non-English speaking country of birth is India, where 2.6% of the population, or 2,438 people, were born. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of people born overseas increased by 3,030 or 12.5%, and the number of people from a non-English speaking background increased by 1,912 or 11.3%.

The top six countries of birth are (all with populations over 1,000):

- United Kingdom
- India
- China
- New Zealand
- Greece
- Malaysia

The largest changes in birthplace countries of the population between 2006 and 2011 were for those born in:

- India (886 residents, 57% increase)
- China (658 residents, 38% increase)
- New Zealand (397 residents, 21% increase)
- United Kingdom (237 residents, 6% increase)
- Ireland (220 residents, 76%)

The major increases in the Indian, Chinese and Malaysian communities are in the age groups between 24-55 years. This increase accounts for students, families and skilled residents moving into the area.

Due to this increase in younger migration University Students from Non-English Speaking backgrounds has increased by 2,049.

The Greek and Italian communities, which historically settled post World War II are now part of our ageing population. There has been a decline in the Greek (-172 residents, -9.1%) and Italian (-59 residents, -8.6%) communities in the period 2006-2011. The other decrease was in the Indonesian community (-53 residents, -8.7%).

What languages do we speak at home?

21.3% of our residents speak a non-English language at home. The dominant language spoken, other than English, was Greek, with 4.2% of the population or 3,915 people speaking this language at home. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of people who spoke a language other than English at home increased by 2,429 or 16.4%, and the number of people who spoke English only increased by 2,689 or 4.2%.

The top four languages other than English spoken in Stonnington are (only those over 1,000 residents):

- Greek (3,915 residents)
- Mandarin (2,651 residents)
- Cantonese (1,415 residents)
- Italian (1,150 residents)

The largest changes in the spoken languages of the population between 2006 and 2011 were for those speaking:

- Mandarin (638 residents, 32% increase)
- Gujarati (385 residents, 225% increase)
- Spanish (215 residents, 66% increase)
- French (166 residents, 34% increase)

8. COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The City of Stonnington recognises that our community is enriched by many people, from many cultures, living together in harmony and participating in community life.

Council's aim is to ensure that all residents feel included and have access to services.

In recognition of this, Council:

- Translates relevant information about the Council, the City, key services and programs and disseminates the information using culturally appropriate methods.
- Uses interpreters at Council meetings, events and consultations when required, and translates information as needed.
- Provides culturally diverse residents opportunities to be consulted in the planning and development of policies, services and programs.
- Provides culturally and linguistically diverse clubs and groups opportunities to deliver social support, health promotion and well being programs for their communities via Council's Community Grants and Cultural Diversity Grants programs.

- Celebrates cultural diversity and promotes community harmony by conducting the annual Flavours Festival.
- Supports and enhances the internal Language Aid Program.
- Accepts and responds to information and correspondence in a resident's preferred language.
- Delivers cross-cultural awareness training for staff which includes how to effectively use interpreters and translation services.
- Provides relevant information and a snapshot of the cultural diversity profile of Stonnington community to new staff as part of Council's Induction Program.

9. KEY ACTIONS FOR 2015-2019

Council will work towards achieving the following key actions over the next four years:

- Implement the City of Stonnington 'Statement of Commitment' to Cultural Diversity
- Develop alternative methods of communication with non-English speaking residents via the website and Council's publications. This will include investigating and adopting new technologies and digital communication methods
- Implement the recommendations of the Ethnic Services Committee review and establish the Multicultural Strategic Planning Group
- Establish an internal Cultural Diversity Working Group to facilitate cross communication across Council departments regarding issues affecting culturally diverse communities to better plan and deliver services
- Develop support services for culturally diverse young people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex
- Incorporate cross-cultural awareness training into Council's annual training calendar to ensure that training is provided annually to staff
- Develop and implement a cultural planning checklist to be used by Council services to provide guidance in relation to culturally responsive planning and evaluation
- Develop resident information kits in community languages
- Improve processes and systems to better capture staff abilities and skills to enhance service delivery, and encourage a greater diversity in the workforce
- Develop strategies for engaging with emerging culturally and linguistically diverse communities across all age groups.

10. REFERENCES

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