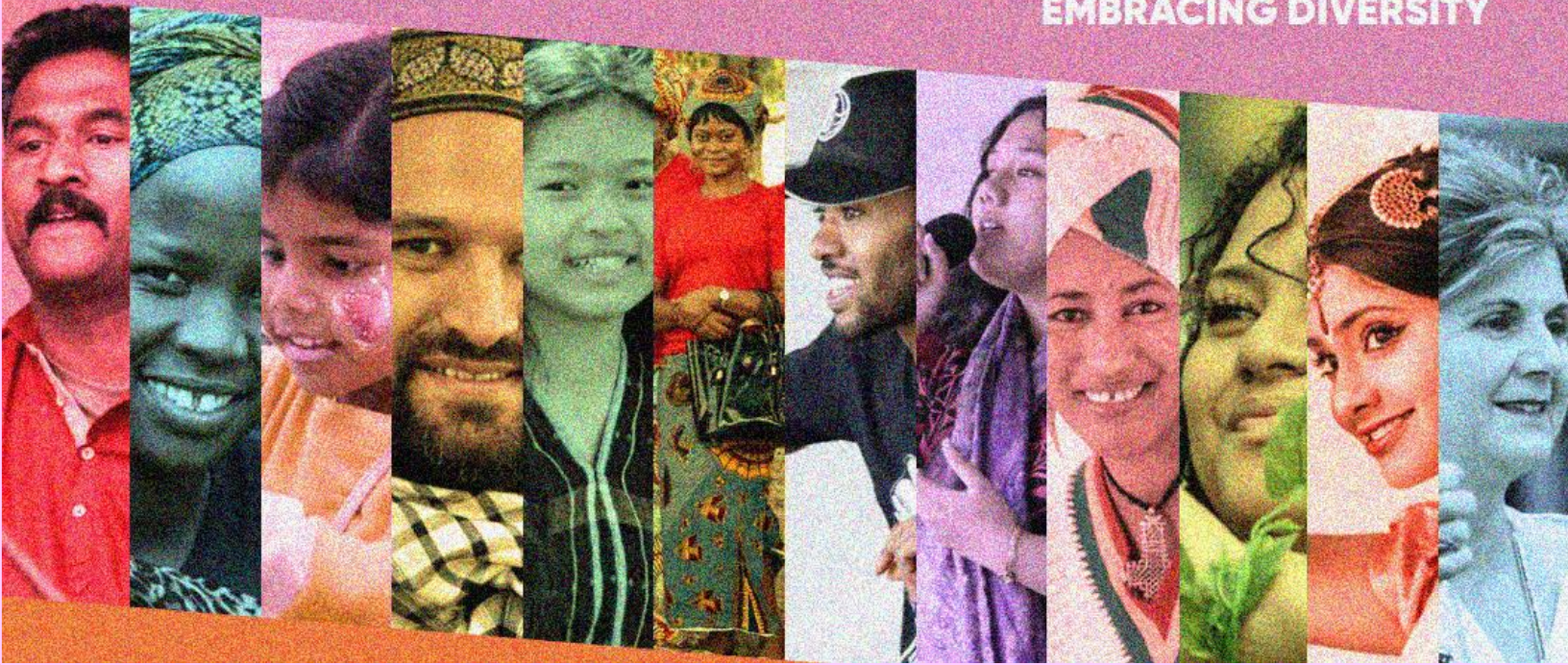


EMBRACING DIVERSITY



## **Towards developing Melton City Council Intercultural Strategy 2022 - 2026**

## 1. The City of Melton's diversity

The City of Melton has a rich history of migration and cultural diversity, beginning with our Aboriginal heritage. The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Wadawarrung and Bunurong peoples are the recognised Traditional Owners of the land on which Melton City is being built. The municipality is now home to a large Aboriginal community which comprises Aboriginal community members from nations and clans across Australia and more than 30,000 people born overseas and representing more than 130 different nations. A particularly large number of the City's residents were born in India, the Philippines, New Zealand, Malta and Vietnam. In recent years, the City has welcomed an increase of people from African and Asian nations through skilled migration, family reunion and refugee immigration streams, adding further to the City's cultural diversity.

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. It is home to more than 185,000 residents in 2021. The population is forecast to increase to 448,000 residents by 2051, an increase of 263,000 residents. While the population growth will occur across the whole City, the new suburbs will experience the largest growth.

With this growth, the Melton City community profile is also diversifying and changing, we have high levels of social and economic diversity, a growing population of children and young people, and a growing number of diverse faith communities, clubs and cultural organisations. Council is also attracting service providers working to meet the community and health needs of diverse populations.

### 1.1 Role of Local Government

The Victorian Government recognises local governments' influential role in working with their diverse communities as the closest level of government to the people.<sup>1</sup> Local governments have an important role in supporting plural, socially cohesive and inclusive communities because they:

- Have well-established track records in supporting diversity
- Are in a strong position to build community capacity and relationships between different community cohorts and groups
- Are visible and accessible leaders with a democratic mandate to implement change
- Have influence over a range of settings and processes where tensions can occur on a day-to-day basis, such as public spaces, sporting and recreational facilities.

Local governments are central to effective local level actions aligned with long-term strategic directions. As facilitators of collaborative partnerships and networks, local government is well placed to drive positive change. However, social cohesion exists amongst community members, not between Council and community, and therefore community members' active role in its creation is paramount.

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<sup>1</sup> [Victorian-And-Proud-of-it-MPS-180207.pdf](#)

## **1.2 Melton City's achievements from previous plans**

Council's previous Intercultural Plan 2017/2021 and Interfaith Strategy 2018/2021 provided a strong foundation for Council's work in the areas of diversity, intercultural and interfaith development.

The key themes of Intercultural Plan 2017/2021 were:

- Embrace Cultural Diversity
- Strengthen Community Participation
- Enhance Organisational Responsiveness, and
- Support Leadership and Advocacy.

The key themes of Interfaith Strategy 2018/2021 were:

- Build sustainable relationship
- Enhance interfaith capacity
- Foster collaborative partnership.

These strategic documents led to many actions which enabled Council to make considerable inroads towards interculturalism and interfaith leadership development. Some key achievements included:

- Achieved accreditation as a member of Intercultural Cities Network
- Improved resident access to translation (through the website tool Recite) and interpreting services across Council
- Led the Melton New and Emerging Communities Network with over 34 service providers
- Delivered eight 'Curious About Cultures' Community Profile interactive sessions delivered to over 400 participants
- Delivered the Melton Interfaith Leadership Project, growing and strengthening the Melton Interfaith Network and interfaith dialogue
- Delivered large intercultural events such as Harmony Day and the Djerriwarrh Intercultural Stage
- Engaged community members to advise Council on intercultural matters
- Trained 150 staff members in Intercultural Communication Skills workshops.

## **1.3 Melton City as an Intercultural City**

As one of the key actions of Council's Intercultural Plan 2017-2021, the City of Melton became an accredited member of Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Program (ICC) in 2017. This membership supports local governments to design and implement diversity plans and policies focussing on policy paradigm for managing diversity as a resource. This approach views diversity as presenting both challenges and opportunities, with equality and interaction as key principles.

A key aspect of ICC's program focusses on benchmarking and measuring progress via the Intercultural City Index tool.



The City of Melton completed the Intercultural City Index process in 2017 and was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among cities with less than 200,000 inhabitants and 19<sup>th</sup> among cities with more than 15% of foreign-born residents. The ranking was based on an analysis of responses to 73 questions grouped in 11 indicators with three distinct types of data. Indicators were weighed for relative importance and focused on the areas of: commitment; education; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and social life policies; public spaces; mediation and conflict resolution; language; media; international outlook; intelligence/competence; welcoming and governance.

The ICC membership provides Council with access to a vast set of policy documents, resources and experts across the world Council could utilise to incorporate nuanced and emerging trends in the areas of diversity, interculturalism and inclusion. The membership also helps Council to learn from member cities across the world and to collaborate with member cities in the Asia Pacific region to co-design and co-deliver relevant initiatives.

For example, in 2019, the cities of Melton, Ballarat and Maribyrnong partnered to host the inaugural Intercultural Cities Australasia Summit. This three-day summit provided a platform to explore, learn and be inspired by international and local intercultural thought leaders and several showcased initiatives. The Summit attracted 500 community and government leaders, strengthened the ongoing partnership between the Council of Europe and Australia's three member local governments, and sparked new local intercultural partnerships and initiatives. Each of the partner cities has a very different community context, and establishing this cross-municipal working relationship increased collective understanding and impact exponentially.

#### **1.4 The new Intercultural Strategy 2022-2026 development**

The new Intercultural Strategy 2022-2026 will deliver on the following Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25 strategic objectives:

- 1.1.2 Contribute to a welcoming community which embraces diversity.
- 1.1.3 Contribute to reducing inequalities among people living with disability, seniors, diverse faith and cultural groups, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and LGBTIQ+ people and contribute to strengthening respectful relationships between all.
- 1.2.2 Empower the community to strengthen civic pride, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging.
- 5.2.3 Provide opportunities for meaningful community engagement, especially with diverse faith and cultural groups.

Council will consult with the communities identified in strategic objective 1.1.3 to explore their ideas about how we can strengthen our international ranking in different Intercultural Cities Index themes. Council's Intercultural Advisory Committee will monitor the strategy's development.

## **1.5 Community Engagement and Consultation**

Council is running targeted consultations with key groups as well as in-person and online workshops for people to share their thoughts and ideas.

There is also an online survey, which can be completed online.

You can also complete the survey over the phone by being asked the questions by a Council officer. To arrange this and/or request interpreting services at any workshops, please contact:

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Email: [essand@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:essand@melton.vic.gov.au) or

Phone: 9747 7200 during office hours.