



Victorian Government report on Multicultural Affairs 2023–24

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Premier
and Cabinet

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Government acknowledges Victoria's First Peoples and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Victoria is a proud, multicultural state. We value diversity, including the 65,000 years of living First Peoples culture. We recognise that since time immemorial, First Peoples in Victoria have practised their law and lore, customs and languages, and nurtured Country through their spiritual, cultural, material and economic connections to land, water and resources.

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Peoples in the face of historical and ongoing injustices and the survival of their living cultures, knowledges and traditions.

We will all have a brighter future if we continue to learn about and value Aboriginal culture, practices and ways of working.

Acknowledgement of Treaty and Truth

Treaty gives us a pathway to change what is not working – to finally give First Peoples a say on the policies that impact their lives.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission is helping us understand our history from the perspective of Aboriginal people – how it impacts on their present and how Treaty can be the pathway to practical changes and solutions. Learning more about the history of First Peoples in this state will help us build a shared future and shared pride in the Aboriginal heritage of this land we all love, and which is our home.

We started on the path to Treaty eight years ago, and we have made significant progress in this journey.

Through Treaty, we can bring Victorians together and feel shared pride in Aboriginal heritage, history and culture.

Thank you

The Victorian Government acknowledges the important role of government partners, including local councils and service agencies, in delivering the programs and initiatives reflected in this report. We thank all community leaders and volunteers who have contributed to supporting multicultural communities across our state.

We also thank our government colleagues for their assistance in collating the data for this report as well as all the community members who shared their powerful stories.

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Message from the Minister for Multicultural Affairs

It is my privilege to present the *Victorian Government report on Multicultural Affairs 2023–24*. This year has been one of significant progress, borne out of equally significant challenges. The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring everyone feels safe, respected, supported and celebrated – without exception.

In 2023–24, the Victorian Government committed **\$77.5 million** across 4 years, including \$69.7 million in election commitments for programs, initiatives and communications activities that support our multicultural and multifaith communities.

A total of **\$40 million** was dedicated to supporting the development of and upgrades to cultural and community hubs, ensuring safe and accessible spaces for multicultural groups to gather and connect.

Victorians were also encouraged to celebrate and share their cultures through festivals, religious observances, and community events, fostering greater cross-cultural understanding and participation through a **\$12 million** investment in the Multicultural Festivals and Events program.

In our commitment to standing together against hate speech and violent extremism, **\$6 million** has been dedicated to encouraging individuals, organisations, communities, government and institutions to prevent and tackle antisemitism and Islamophobia.

A further **\$3 million** was also provided to continue delivering the Victorian African Communities Action Plan, ensuring targeted support to African communities through leadership programs, employment initiatives, and youth engagement activities.

As we look ahead, it is encouraging to see Victorians engaging through festivals, community initiatives, and days of religious observances, reaffirming the strength of our cultural and linguistic diversity.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the Victorian Multicultural Commission for their dedication and commitment to advocating for our diverse communities.

I also wish to acknowledge the remarkable contributions of the many culturally and linguistically diverse organisations across Victoria. Their passion for preserving and sharing their culture and heritage enriches the broader community and strengthens our multicultural identity.

Finally, I would like to thank all government departments and staff who have contributed to this report. I look forward to further strengthening our engagement with multicultural communities, supporting the implementation of Victoria's Anti Racism Strategy, and contributing to the richness of our state's diversity.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ingrid Stitt'.

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Introduction

Victoria is one of Australia's most culturally and linguistically diverse states. Approximately one-third of our growing population was born overseas.

According to the most recent census, Victorians:



Come from more than 300 ancestries



Speak 290 languages and dialects



Follow more than 200 faiths

This report is a snapshot of the Victorian Government's commitment to multicultural and faith communities. It shows the progress of multiculturalism across the state.



Legal and policy frameworks underpinning this report

This report fulfils the Victorian Government's requirement of the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* (Vic).

The Act requires government departments to report annually to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and to the Victorian Parliament. They must report on programs and initiatives that support Victoria's multicultural community.

Table 1 lists legislative and policy documents that guide the government's mission to build an inclusive, engaged and cohesive Victoria.

Table 1: Victoria's multicultural frameworks

| Type | Description |
|---|---|
| Acts of Parliament | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The <i>Multicultural Victoria Act 2011</i> provides the framework for a whole-of-government approach to multiculturalism in Victoria. It establishes the Victorian Multicultural Commission as a statutory authority. It also sets out reporting requirements for departments and ministers. It requires Victorian government departments to develop and implement cultural diversity plans.• The <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> requires all Victorian departments and service providers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to identify and eliminate discrimination.• The <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> sets out the basic rights of Victorians to live with freedom, respect, equality and dignity. It also requires public authorities to act in accordance with the Charter.• The <i>Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001</i> prohibits behaviours that incite or encourage hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against another person or group of people because of their race or religion. |
| Victorian Government Multicultural Statement | A publicly available policy statement that sets out the Victorian Government's vision and commitment to multiculturalism in Victoria. ¹ |
| Departmental cultural diversity plans | Plans created by government departments to facilitate diversity and multiculturalism both internally and when delivering services and programs to the Victorian community. |
| Individual departmental policies, plans and strategies | Departments undertake ongoing reviews of policies, strategies and planning frameworks. These reviews respond to the changing needs of culturally diverse communities and reflect the government's commitment to multiculturalism. |

¹ The policy statement can be found on the Victorian Government website's Multicultural policy statement page.

Working to achieve positive outcomes

The *Multicultural Affairs outcomes framework*² sets out the Victorian Government's approach to multiculturalism.

The framework groups programs and initiatives according to 5 goals (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Goals of the *Multicultural Affairs outcomes framework*

| Goal | Desired outcomes for Victorians |
|---|---|
| Victorians are safe and secure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victorians live free from abuse, violence and fear.• Victorians have suitable and stable housing. |
| Victorians are healthy and well. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victorians have good physical and mental health.• Victorians have equitable access to health and human services. |
| Victorians are able to participate fully. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victorians participate in learning and education.• Victorians participate in and contribute to the economy.• Victorians have financial security.• Victorians understand, are empowered by and exercise their rights.• Victorians have access to an environment that promotes liveability, sustainability and inclusion. |
| Victorians are connected to culture and community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victorians are socially engaged and live in inclusive communities.• Victorians can safely identify with and connect with their culture and identity. |
| Victorians have equal rights and opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victorians live free from discrimination.• Opportunities to participate in the workforce are available to all Victorians. |



This report does not capture the full range of activities Victorian government departments and portfolio agencies have undertaken. Instead, it provides a snapshot of activities and achievements supporting multicultural and multifaith communities between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024 across the Victorian Government. It includes case studies to highlight the positive impact of initiatives on local communities.

² *Victorian multicultural policy statement*, p. 25. Available from the Victorian Government website's Multicultural policy statement page.

Terminology, abbreviations and frequently used terms

Language statement

Language is important and can change over time. Words can have different meanings for different people.

We recognise the diversity of First Peoples, communities and culture throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe First Peoples of southeast Australia, we use the terms 'First Peoples' and 'Aboriginal' to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who live in Victoria.

The term 'multicultural community' refers to the vast number of diverse cultural and ethnic groups in Victoria.

The term 'multifaith community' refers to the diverse faith groups in Victoria.

The words 'our' and 'we' in this document refer to the Victorian Government.

The phrase 'racism and discrimination' in this document includes all forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, cultural background, country of origin and faith.

List of government departments

| Abbreviation | Department |
|--------------|--|
| DE | Department of Education |
| DEECA | Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action |
| DFFH | Department of Families, Fairness and Housing |
| DGS | Department of Government Services |
| DH | Department of Health |
| DJCS | Department of Justice and Community Safety |
| DJSIR | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions |
| DPC | Department of Premier and Cabinet |
| DTP | Department of Transport and Planning |
| DTF | Department of Treasury and Finance |



Victorians are safe and secure

Keeping communities safe

The Victorian Government keeps multicultural communities safe through targeted programs and initiatives.

The TAC **L2P Program** is funded by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC). It is administered by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and delivered by more than 50 councils and non-profit community agencies across Victoria.

This free program is for eligible Victorian learner drivers who do not have access to a supervising driver or vehicle. It supports them to complete the mandatory 120 hours of supervised driving they need to get their driver's licence.

The program supports 17% of learner drivers from multicultural backgrounds. This support helps them access culturally appropriate driver mentors and L2P vehicles (**DTP: \$8.1 million in 2023–24**).

Program outcomes included:

- 13% of probationary licences obtained were from learners with multicultural backgrounds
- 19% of the program's total drive hours was contributed to by learners from multicultural backgrounds
- 20% of volunteer mentors speak a language other than English.

Palestine Australia Relief and Action (PARA) received funding from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to **assist the settlement of newly arrived Palestinians** fleeing the Israel–Gaza conflict. The initiative helped Palestinian migrants and refugees to overcome their experience of conflict and displacement. This included ensuring they have a home and pathways to employment. The project also created business and social connections, strengthening social inclusion (**DPC: \$0.125 million in 2023–24**).

Program outcomes included:

- recruiting a Settlement Support Officer to support activities
- establishing a partnership with Victoria's Humanitarian Settlement Program provider, AMES
- providing critical accommodation support to 6 families for a period of up to 6 months to help with immediate settlement.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's (DFFH) **Supporting Multicultural and Faith Communities to Prevent Family Violence Program** works with multicultural and faith communities to end family violence.

The program funds 33 multicultural and faith community organisations. These organisations work with their communities to co-design and deliver culturally tailored projects to prevent family violence.

In 2023–24, further funding allowed 23 of these 33 organisations to extend their projects for one year.

Since its inception in 2021, the program has reached more than 35,000 people in 45 cultural and faith communities.

This included 15,152 people in the 2023–24 period (**DFFH: \$1.61 million in 2023–24**).

The Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) funds InTouch multicultural legal centre to **provide free legal services for eligible migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence**.

In 2023–24, InTouch provided:

- legal support to more than 700 women
- migration support to 300 women
- 350 secondary consultations to the family violence and community legal sectors.

InTouch delivered fortnightly outreach clinics at Dandenong Hospital. This included working closely with the social work team, visiting the maternity ward and attending the Women's Health Clinic.

The team provided early intervention for migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence. This included giving information, advice and guidance.

As well as legal advice, casework and secondary consults to clients, InTouch provided education sessions for health staff. This helped staff to identify people in legal need and improved referral pathways to InTouch.

InTouch also provided training to the Monash Health Healthy Mother Healthy Babies team. This training covered the relationship between migration, family law and family violence.

InTouch continued to deliver its outreach clinic to Your Community Health in East Reservoir (**DJCS: \$0.263 million in 2023–24**).

Equal access to secure accommodation

The Victorian Government supports our multicultural communities to find safe and secure housing. To address the unique challenges these communities face, we fund initiatives and programs that improve their housing stability.

The **My Tenancy Rights and Responsibilities: Empowering Victorian Renters Project** delivered by Tenants Victoria helped multicultural renters understand their rental rights and responsibilities through targeted education.

As part of the project, the Bicultural Community Engagement team also worked with renters with urgent needs. The team linked them into existing support programs, including the Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program managed by Consumer Affairs Victoria (**DGS: \$0.29 million in 2023–24**).

In 2023–24, this initiative:

- developed multilingual video resources in Mandarin, Cantonese and Malay
- developed renting factsheets translated into Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Hindi and Punjabi
- held 4 large online forums (in partnership with the Victorian Multicultural Commission) attended by more than 130 people that covered:
 - renters' rights
 - rental scams
- hosted 14 interactive small-group sessions for newer migrant and refugee communities that covered:
 - renters' rights and responsibilities, discrimination and supporting renters living with disability
 - family violence.

Communities represented included: Afghan, African, Burmese, Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, Sudanese, Syrian, Thai, Vietnamese, Turkish, Pakistani, Ethiopian, Russian, Ukrainian, Guinean, Iraqi and Somali.

In 2023–24 the Minister for Consumer Affairs approved 9 grants under the **Rental Stress Support Package**. This was an initiative under the Housing Statement. The package increased access to rental support services, such as information and advice, advocacy and legal assistance. It prioritised support for culturally and linguistically diverse communities who needed it the most. Grant recipients included South East Community Links (SECL) in the southern metropolitan region. This region is one of the most culturally diverse areas in Australia. Approximately 70% of its residents speak a language other than English at home. It includes people from more than 170 different cultural backgrounds.

The government provided establishment funding in 2023–24. Service delivery commenced from 1 July 2024 (**DGS: \$1.28 million in 2023–24**).

In response to the October 2022 floods, the **Tenancy Stress Victoria Program** supported Victorian renters in flood-affected areas of western Melbourne, Loddon and Goulburn.

Tenancy Stress Victoria supported these renters to stay in their homes where possible. It provided integrated legal, social work and financial counselling assistance to help renters negotiate positive outcomes.

In 2023–24, the program supported more than 250 renters, including 49 from a multicultural community (**DGS: \$0.66 million in 2023–24**).

Case study

DFFH funds Pride in Place to provide a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQIA+ people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The program helps people find housing and connect with support services. VincentCare Victoria and Drummond Street Services in partnership with Uniting and Family Access Network deliver the program.

Pride in Place supported Amelia, a transgender woman and refugee, to overcome significant challenges. Amelia fled her home country due to discrimination and violence based on her sexuality and gender identity. She arrived in Australia feeling lost. She didn't know how to navigate housing, employment or community services. Unfortunately, the housing she found wasn't safe, and she suffered violence and exploitation.

After a referral from a health service, Amelia's life took a turn for the better. She found Pride in Place, which connected her with safe and welcoming support. A dedicated service navigator at Pride in Place knew just who could help her. They arranged for Amelia to meet with a Family Violence Case Manager at Queerspace, a program specifically designed for LGBTQIA+ people experiencing violence. The program is run by Drummond Street Services.

The case manager used a specialised family violence risk assessment framework to understand Amelia's situation and the dangers she faced. Together, Amelia, Pride in Place and Queerspace worked as a team. They developed a plan to help Amelia leave her unsafe living situation. This included providing her with emergency accommodation, which was a crucial first step towards a brighter future.

From there, Pride in Place supported Amelia with a successful referral to a brand-new community housing unit, where the Victorian Housing Register offered her a long-term lease. With stable housing in place, Amelia found a counsellor via the Pride in Place Network and began to process her past experiences. Pride in Place also helped her navigate Centrelink and connected her with local LGBTQIA+ groups. This gave her social connection and a sense of belonging.

Today, Amelia thrives in her new home. She has a supportive circle of friends for coffee dates and shared meals. She's found a job and is saving to bring her mother to Australia for a visit. The fear and instability she once faced have been replaced by a newfound sense of autonomy and peace. In her own words, Amelia credits Pride in Place with saving her life.

Emergency management

Emergencies and disasters have unique challenges for Victorians from multicultural communities. The Victorian Government is working to support these communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

In particular, we need to make sure multicultural communities can quickly get accurate information in their own languages when disaster strikes. With funding from DFFH, the University of Melbourne led an investigation into **Understanding and Improving Machine Translation for Emergency Communications**. This project aimed to improve emergency messaging for multicultural communities.

The team provided practical suggestions for reducing problems when using machine translation technology. This work helped to craft better emergency communication for Victoria's multicultural communities (**DFFH: \$0.045 million in 2023–24**).

Similarly, **Multicultural Emergency Management Initiatives** helped build stronger connections with multicultural communities before, during and after emergencies. It helped government work with these communities in ways that respect their cultures and meet their needs (**DJCS: \$1.5 million in 2023–24**).

To date, the project has:

- supported regional multicultural working groups through ethnic communities councils and peak bodies
- delivered a knowledge-sharing forum that brought together the community, multicultural organisations and emergency services
- supported and resourced the Multicultural Emergency Management Partnership. This statewide partnership was established during COVID-19. It brings together multicultural community leaders and emergency management leaders.

In mid-February 2024, a large storm caused widespread damage to homes and properties across central and eastern Victoria. In the 48 hours during and after the storm, we received more than 4,000 requests for help with damaged buildings and fallen trees. Large areas of Victoria experienced electricity outages, and many homes were without power for several days. Lightning strikes also caused bushfires in western Victoria.

The government provided funding for people affected by these emergencies. The **Recovery Support Program** offered a single point of contact, providing trauma-informed information and advice. This included helping people access financial and wellbeing support as well as assistance with paperwork and engaging with insurers and builders (**DJCS: \$3.548 million in 2023–24**).

The Recovery Support Program assisted 1,793 households affected by the February 2024 event. Of these, 17 households reported being of multifaith or multicultural background. We provided translated information, including how to access supports.

People from multicultural communities could also access the program using the Emergency Recovery Hotline. This hotline provides information in different languages through the Translating and Interpreting Service.

Victorians are healthy and well

Supporting Victorians' physical and mental health

In 2023–24, the government funded the Cancer Council Victoria (CCV) to partner with organisations serving multicultural communities. This work was part of the **Victorian Cancer Screening Framework**.

The project aimed to increase awareness and access to cancer screening. It encouraged people from Vietnamese, Hindi and Punjabi speaking communities to access bowel cancer screening.

CCV also ran capacity-building sessions for more than 70 bicultural workers fluent in languages including Hindi, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin, Burmese, Urdu and Haka Chin (**DH as part of the \$3.6 million Cancer Screening Framework program**).

In addition, Bendigo Community Health Services provided **cancer support for people from refugee backgrounds**. This included around 30 education sessions for just under 300 Karen and Afghan community members. These sessions covered bowel, breast, prostate and cervical cancer and cancer screening. The project included cancer-specific training for bicultural workers working with people from refugee backgrounds. This work aimed to ensure equitable outcomes following cancer diagnosis.

CCV and BreastScreen Victoria also co-developed targeted cancer and cancer-screening resources for the Karen and Afghan communities.

Screening services worked with communities to improve access, such as providing cancer care navigation for Karen and Afghan community members with cancer (**DH: \$0.4 million in 2023–24**).

Another project, DH's **Lactation Support Initiative**, supports women from multicultural backgrounds to breastfeed. The initiative worked with the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) to provide training and courses for multicultural communities. It also recruited multicultural support mentors.

In 2023–24, 8 representatives took part in training to help their communities. These representatives came from Sri Lankan, Filipino, Vietnamese, Singaporean, Indian and South African backgrounds. The training prepared them to provide peer support and connect new families with qualified lactation consultants. It included linking families to services offered by Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services.

The initiative also supported local government MCH services to provide staff training and support for lactation consultations. Some MCH services set up new breastfeeding clinics. Others added more sessions in their existing clinics. They also provided educational classes (**DH: \$1 million in 2023–24**).



Case study

The Smile Squad delivers free oral health promotion, dental check-ups and treatment to Victorian government school students at school. We know that poor oral health disproportionately affects people from multicultural backgrounds – in particular, those who are refugees and asylum seekers.

The Smile Squad Refugee Advisory Group was established in 2023 to:

- better understand the oral health needs and challenges of students from refugee backgrounds
- improve the reach and access of the Smile Squad program.

Advisory group members shaped the design and promotion of the Dental Health Services Victoria's Refugee Talent Scholarship. This scholarship supports dentists from refugee backgrounds to gain Australian registration.

Smile Squad also held community consultations with parents. This was done through the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH). These parents had primary school children and came from refugee communities from Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Myanmar and Rohingya regions. Dental care experts, schools, and refugee and asylum seeker families helped to create a simplified consent form. The new form aimed to increase participation among priority groups.



Image: Smile Squad Refugee Advisory Group discussion

Continued support to recover from COVID-19

The Victorian Government undertook targeted initiatives to help our multicultural communities recover from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023–24, this included extending mental health support within the COVID-19 response package to multicultural community services. These services were Cabrini Outreach, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and Foundation House.

The funding allowed Cabrini Outreach to continue operating The Hub. This dedicated facility provides specialised mental health services for people seeking asylum, even if they do not have a Medicare Card. In 2023–24, The Hub offered comprehensive care to more than 250 people from multicultural backgrounds who faced social isolation and psychological distress. The Hub uses a multidisciplinary approach that includes psychiatric assessment and management, counselling and referrals.

This funding also enabled the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to deliver the Mental Health and Wellbeing Response Program. The program provides comprehensive, multidisciplinary support. It includes psychiatry, mental health, nursing, eye care, immunisations and allied health, as well as support to access medications. In 2023–24, close to 900 people were supported through more than 6,750 appointments.

The government also funded Foundation House to provide more than 7,856 hours of specialist psychiatric and counselling services. These services support people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds who have experienced torture and trauma (**DH: \$2.607 million in 2023–24**).

DH continued to support community organisations through its COVID-19 Community Grants Program. The program funded multicultural community organisations to share information about testing, vaccination and COVID-19 medication (**DH: \$2.036 million in 2023–24**).

Grants helped 31 multicultural organisations support communities to prevent COVID-19 and socialise safely. This support reached 41 priority language groups across Victoria.



Victorians are able to participate fully

Communicating with Victoria's multicultural communities

Culturally appropriate communication creates valuable and meaningful program outcomes. Effective communication helps:

- break down barriers
- improve access to services
- achieve better outcomes for Victoria's multicultural and multifaith communities.

Interpreting and translation services

Table 3: Expenditure on interpreting, translating and language allowance services, 2023–24³

| Department | Expenditure (excluding GST) | Percentage of total reported government expenditure on interpretation and translation (%) |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Department of Education | \$3,063,735 ⁴ | 7.2% |
| Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action | \$4,982 | 0.1% |
| Department of Families, Fairness and Housing | \$5,044,711 | 11.8% |
| Department of Government Services | \$211,797.38 | 0.5% |
| Department of Health | \$25,076,576 | 58.6% |
| Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions | \$248,331.87 | 0.6% |
| Department of Justice and Community Safety | \$1,440,932 | 3.4% |
| Department of Premier and Cabinet | \$7,604,387 | 17.8% |
| Department of Transport and Planning | \$125,869.03 | 0.3% |
| Department of Treasury and Finance | \$0 | 0% |
| Total | \$42,821,321 | 100 ⁵ |

³ These figures include expenditure by departments only (not portfolio agencies).

⁴ DE's expenditure includes corporate expenditure.

⁵ Due to rounding the total percentage figure is over 100.

Multicultural media campaigns

In 2023–24, Victorian Government policy required that departments and agencies spend at least 15% of their campaign media budget on multicultural media (**Table 4 and Table 5**).⁶

Table 4: Departmental multicultural media campaign expenditure as a percentage of total media campaign expenditure⁷

| Department | 2022–23 expenditure (%) | 2023–24 expenditure (%) |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Department of Education | 8.80 | 16.2 |
| Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action | 8.97 | 14.9 |
| Department of Families, Fairness and Housing | 10.44 | 15.2 |
| Department of Government Services ⁸ | N/A | N/A ⁹ |
| Department of Health | 11.10 | 16.6 |
| Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions | 11.79 | 29.6 |
| Department of Justice and Community Safety | 9.48 | 16.6 |
| Department of Premier and Cabinet | 12.05 | 50.1 |
| Department of Transport and Planning | 11.45 | 21.4 |
| Department of Treasury and Finance | 6.34 | N/A ¹⁰ |

⁶ For the years prior to 2023–24, the Victorian Government required departments and agencies to spend at least 5% of their campaign advertising budget on multicultural media.

⁷ These figures include expenditure by departments only (not portfolio agencies). They show campaign advertising only. These figures also exclude expenditure on interstate and international advertising (this is because the government's 15% multicultural campaign expenditure policy only applies to advertising within Victoria).

⁸ Limited data is available for 2022–23, because the Department of Government Services was established on 1 January 2023.

⁹ DGS did not undertake any campaign advertising during 2023–24.

¹⁰ DTF did not undertake any campaign advertising during 2023–24.

Table 5: Total Victorian Government multicultural media campaign expenditure as a percentage of total media campaign expenditure¹¹

| Financial year | Multicultural expenditure (%) |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 2023–24 | 15 |
| 2022–23 | 6.7 |
| 2021–22 | 10.4 |
| 2020–21 | 9.6 |
| 2019–20 | 7.6 |
| 2018–19 | 5.0 |
| 2017–18 | 5.2 |
| 2016–17 | 6.0 |
| 2015–16 | 5.5 |

Consumer Affairs Victoria translated their **advertising campaign on rental minimum standards** into 9 different languages. These included Arabic, Chinese (both traditional and simplified), Greek and Vietnamese. The campaign involved multilingual social media advertising. It also involved translating things like the Consumer Affairs Victoria website and Real Estate Institute of Victoria information sheets (**DGS: \$0.047 million**).

Victorians affected by the October 2022 floods were provided access to financial counsellors. In 2023–24, this involved supporting 348 people. As part of the program, financial counsellors supported flood-affected Victorians to manage their debts and get their finances back under control. Counselling included information and referral to other services, negotiating with a creditor, or working out a payment plan for debts. Financial counsellors also provided support for negotiating with banks for a pause on mortgage payments and in accessing grants. Of the Victorians receiving this support, 52 identified as being from a multicultural community (**DGS: \$1.88 million in 2023–24**).

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA) **\$250 Power Saving Bonus Community Outreach Program** provided targeted assistance for vulnerable and hard-to-reach households. This included people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The Power Saving Bonus provides Victorian households with a \$250 payment to ease cost of living pressures. It also encourages households to compare energy prices to save money.

In partnership with community and not-for-profit organisations, the program ensured vulnerable households knew about how to access the Power Saving Bonus. This included tailored in-person and over-the-phone support such as translation services for CALD households.

In addition, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria provided dedicated support for CALD households. They did this through in-person support at multicultural organisation workshops and events.

The fourth round of the Power Saving Bonus, which ran from 24 March 2023 to 31 August 2023, supported more than 67,000 households to apply for the \$250 payment through the outreach program.

Of the 67,000 households who received support, 9% spoke a language other than English as their primary language (**DEECA: \$2.7 million in 2023–24**).

¹¹ This includes departments and agencies combined.

Case study

Victorian Fire Season Campaign – multicultural audiences

DJCS's Victorian Fire Season Campaign is an annual awareness campaign about how to prepare for bushfires.

Research showed that multicultural Victorians have lower rates of fire awareness. To address this, the campaign developed a multiyear strategy to get the message out to multicultural communities.

For the 2023–24 campaign, the team developed custom-designed materials for different cultural communities. We used these in press, radio, social media, out-of-home and digital channels. The 'Know your fire risk, stay safe' campaign featured multicultural families to reflect the communities we wanted to reach. The team identified communities most at risk and developed the material for them.

Languages included Arabic, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Croatian, Dari, Farsi, Karen, Korean, Khmer and Vietnamese. We distributed the material to more than 200 multicultural organisations to share with their communities. The campaign ran from October to March and accounted for 15% of the campaign's media expenditure.



Image: Korean and Arabic creative from the 'Know your fire risk, stay safe' multicultural campaign

Opportunities to learn and grow

The **Le Mana Pasifika Project** helps Pasifika young people and families in Melbourne's south-east and north-west. Run by the Centre for Multicultural Youth with funding from DFFH, this program aims to improve education and create more opportunities for Pasifika young people aged 12 to 25. The project also helps local services better support these young people. In 2023–24, the project supported more than 1,000 Pasifika young people through culturally appropriate service referrals, mentoring, leadership, employment, education and cultural activities that kept them engaged (**DFFH: funded as part of the \$10.2 million 2023–24 State Budget's Investing Early Where It Matters package**).

The **Early Childhood Language Program** from the Department of Education (DE) supported around 7,000 4-year-old children in kindergartens to learn in a language other than English. Children in around 176 kindergartens spent 3 hours each week learning another language. In 21 bilingual kindergartens, children spent 12 hours each week learning in another language. The program employed around 200 language teachers and offered 22 languages including Arabic, Auslan, Cantonese, Mandarin, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese (**DE: \$7.6 million in 2023–24**).

In partnership with DE and local Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) providers, **the Brotherhood of St Laurence Family Learning Support Program** continued to help families and children from vulnerable CALD backgrounds living in public housing in Melbourne, Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong and Yarra. The program supported families to participate in ECEC and transition to school through one-on-one home learning sessions and multicultural playgroups (**DE: \$0.4 million in 2023–24**).

As part of the **Place Based Partnerships to Support School Engagement and Completion Initiative**, DE funded 26 government and Catholic school communities with high numbers of students from African heritage and Pasifika backgrounds. These schools worked together to design and deliver place-based approaches to increase school participation and completion rates for these communities. DE also partnered with North Melbourne Football Club and Melbourne Victory to run in-person school holiday programs for culturally diverse young people. These holiday programs focused on sport and skills development (**DE: \$2.8 million in 2023–24**).

The Victorian Government's 10-year **Victorian African Communities Action Plan** (action plan) continued to improve social and economic outcomes for Victoria's diverse African communities (**DPC: \$4.4 million in 2023–24**).

In 2023–24, the action plan delivered these initiatives and outcomes:

- The Employment Brokers program assisted over 680 people to access support and training and placed over 270 people into employment (\$1.069 million).
- Project Sunrise is an alcohol and other drugs initiative. It provided targeted support to more than 60 young people and over 40 family members (\$0.646 million).
- Homework clubs across Victoria supported 1,355 students of African heritage. School Community Liaison Officers in 28 Victorian schools supported 2,179 students and 927 families (\$2.693 million, led by DE).

Case study

Women in School Leadership (WISL) – Empowering girls in Victorian and Indian schools

Through DE's Women in School Leadership program, Aintree Primary School (in Victoria, Australia), and Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Mehta Vidyalaya (a K–12 public school in New Delhi, India) established the Girlosophy program. The program helped Grade 6 girls to gain confidence in maths while working together across cultures.

The students explored different ways to learn maths, shared their learning experiences and improved their intercultural skills.

Kim Mitchell, principal of Aintree Primary School, said, 'professional learning programs like WISL that support impactful international school collaborations contribute to improved student learning outcomes and cultural knowledge exchange'.

Employment assistance and career development

The **African Music and Cultural Festival (AMCF)**, Australia's largest African festival, draws over 50,000 people each year and involves 35 African Australian communities. DE partnered with AMCF to use the festival's platforms to promote its programs to audiences that are typically difficult to reach (**DE: \$25,000 in 2023–24**). The festival promoted:

- teacher training incentives for young graduates and older, experienced people looking to change careers
- early childhood and pre-prep workforce participation programs
- internship opportunities across the department.

DE continued putting its mandatory **Holocaust Education – Delivery Requirements policy** into action. This work prevents and combats antisemitism and racism in Victorian schools. Under the policy, all Victorian government secondary school students must be taught about the Holocaust as part of the level 9/10 World War II history curriculum.

DE provided teachers with resources developed in partnership with Holocaust education experts from Victorian cultural organisations and universities. In addition, the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, co-funded by the department and the Gandel Foundation, continued to deliver professional learning to teachers. This funding ensures that teachers have the knowledge, pedagogy and confidence to teach about the Holocaust (**DE: \$44,540 in 2023–24**).

DE also funded the **Melbourne Holocaust Museum's new Hidden exhibition** for upper primary school students (**DE: \$30,000 in 2023–24**). As part of this program, 3,000 Victorian government students will attend the exhibition and participate in learning activities before and after their visit.

Victorians are connected to culture and community

Celebrating culture

The Minister for Youth Justice aimed to address the over-representation of certain groups in youth justice. This approach drew on lived cultural and justice system experience. Groups included South Sudanese Australian, other African Australian and Pasifika Australian young people. The Minister allocated \$3 million over 3 years for programs supporting multicultural young people in youth justice (**DJCS: \$0.173 million in 2023–24**).

The **Youth Justice Lived-Experience Mentoring Program** includes:

- a mentoring program at the Centre for Multicultural Youth
- additional mentoring programs selected through a grants process
- evaluation of funded lived-experience mentoring programs, conducted by Deakin University.

These programs empower young people to build relationships and foster social inclusion. They also encourage connection to community and culture.

The **Multicultural Seniors Support 2021–2025 program** supported more than 990 seniors organisations. The program helped these organisations to run social and cultural activities, improve digital accessibility and literacy, and purchase essential equipment and resources. It also contributed to running and insurance costs (**DPC: \$2 million in 2023–24**).

The **Multicultural Festivals and Events Program** supported 573 organisations to deliver multicultural festivals and events across the state during 2023–24 (**DPC: \$2.575 million**).

In 2023–24, the **Regional Multicultural Festivals and Events Fund** supported 73 regional multicultural organisations to hold events in regional Victoria (**DPC: \$1.187 million in 2023–24**).

Case study

Buddha's Light International Association of Victoria Inc. is a multicultural faith-based organisation. It promotes humanistic Buddhism through multicultural understanding, compassion and social harmony. The organisation runs religious and community activities, provides support services and delivers multicultural events.

In May 2024, the organisation held the 2024 Buddha's Day and Multicultural Festival to celebrate multiculturalism. Around 80,000 people attended the 3-day event at Federation Square in Melbourne. It included traditional Buddhist ceremonies, multicultural performances and digital animations, as well as mindfulness and meditation experiences.

It gave Victorians the chance to learn about Buddhism by engaging in traditional rituals, dragon dances and meditation. The 2023–24 Multicultural Festivals and Events program provided \$25,000 for the festival.

Case study

Benalla Migrants Association Inc. supports migrants to settle in Benalla. It helps people connect and provides a safe space for migrants.

In November 2023, the organisation delivered the Diwali festival, a significant Hindu celebration symbolising the victory of light over darkness.

More than 2,500 people attended the event. It included Indian food, music and dance, along with large-scale art projections and light shows. This event allowed the community from Benalla and other regional towns and metropolitan Melbourne to gather and celebrate.

The Multicultural Festivals and Events program provided \$30,000 for the event.



Case study

The African Music and Cultural Festival ran from 17 to 19 November 2023 at Federation Square in Melbourne.

Now in its 10th year, it is the largest African festival in Australia. More than 35 African Australian communities and organisations helped to put it on. The festival aims to increase cultural awareness and build relationships between different cultures.

Over 50,000 people came to Federation Square to enjoy the many festival activities. These included face painting, street food, cultural performances and artists showing dance, music, fashion and drumming lessons. The organisation received \$100,000 to run the festival as part of a \$400,000 4-year election commitment through the Multicultural Festivals and Events program.



Connecting communities to culturally significant spaces

The **Multicultural and Community Infrastructure Fund (MCIF)** supported 84 multicultural community organisations to build, upgrade and renovate their facilities (**DPC: \$17.6 million in 2023–24**). The program recognises that multicultural communities need safe, accessible and culturally appropriate places to gather.

Millennium House in Footscray was upgraded into a Multicultural Community Hub. Funding came from the **West Gate Neighbourhood Fund grants and partnerships program (DTP: \$0.2 million in 2023–24)**. The building now provides a dedicated, multipurpose space to support multicultural groups. The space encourages meaningful conversations between different cultures and generations. This promotes social cohesion, making Millennium House an important centre for community engagement and wellbeing.

The Heide Park and Art Gallery received funding from the **North East Community Funds grants and partnerships program (DTP: \$0.1 million in 2023–24)**. The funding will help build a ceremonial gathering and learning space next to the Birrarung/Yarra River in Bulleen. This will highlight indigenous plants and land management techniques.

Case study

The Multicultural Youth Centre Ltd received a \$0.393 million grant from DPC's 2023–24 Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund to construct the new Centre for Muslim Women's Wellbeing at 31 Kraft Court, Broadmeadows. This project involved:

- building a covered open space and offices
- installing a heating and cooling system
- completing electrical and plumbing work
- building partitions and flooring for the multipurpose hall.

The centre caters mainly for women from Muslim and other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In particular, it supports women from newly arrived and emerging refugee communities, who often have trouble accessing mainstream services. Many of these women also experience social isolation, mental health issues, unemployment and discrimination – all of which are made worse by limited access to culturally safe spaces.

The centre offers women-only spaces, gym facilities and water-based programs. This allows women to exercise, strengthen their cultural connections and engage with mainstream services in a culturally safe environment.

The initiative has helped many women with social inclusion, mental health and wellbeing. For younger generations, the centre provides a place to reconnect with their heritage, access educational support and find positive role models.

Women involved with the centre say it gives them a sense of belonging, helps them overcome barriers to participation and offers hope for future generations to thrive in Australia.

Victorians have equal rights and opportunities

Anti-racism and anti-discrimination

Victoria has a long and rich history of multiculturalism and diversity. This is part of what makes our state such a great place to live. To protect this legacy, the government is combatting racism, faith-based discrimination and hate conduct.

In 2023–24, DPC's Multicultural Affairs portfolio worked alongside the Treaty and First Peoples portfolio to continue the development of **Victoria's first anti-racism strategy**. The strategy provides a 5-year roadmap to reducing racism in all forms – interpersonal, institutional and structural. The strategy is for Victorians of all ages, abilities, genders, sexualities, faiths and cultural backgrounds.

The Victorian Government has also invested \$6 million over 3 years through the Multicultural Affairs portfolio for community-driven initiatives to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia and strengthen social cohesion.

The government allocated \$3 million of this funding for **community-led projects to tackle Islamophobia**. Project partners include the Islamic Museum of Australia, Melbourne Grand Mosque, Islamic Council of Victoria, Board of Imams Victoria and the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights.

Activities include:

- case work and support services for people who experience Islamophobia
- roundtables and capacity-building workshops to foster resilience, belonging and cohesion
- programs to combat misconceptions and to raise awareness of Islamic culture.

The other \$3 million funded **activities to combat antisemitism**. These projects are led by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Zionism Victoria and Melbourne Holocaust Museum.

Activities include programs to strengthen education and awareness about Jewish culture, cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue and tracking incidents of antisemitism.

In addition, the Victorian Government is administering \$900,000 through the 2023–24 *State Budget* for the Community Security Group to investigate antisemitic incidents in the state (**DPC: \$0.9 million in 2023–24**).

Workforce opportunity and participation

The Victorian Government's Jobs Victoria Mentors project has provided employment assistance and mentoring to job seekers experiencing barriers to finding work. This includes people at risk of long-term unemployment of 12 months or more. Culturally diverse Victorians were one of the largest cohorts of Jobs Victoria employment services.

Of the people Jobs Victoria Mentors helped to find a job in 2023–24:

- almost 65% were culturally diverse
- 37% identified as women
- 26% were 24 or younger
- 10% were refugees.

Jobs Victoria Mentors staff delivered employment services in the languages of the communities they serve (**DJSIR: \$22.68 million in 2023–24**).



Case study

The Grass Roots Indie Development series Geelong (GRID) is an artist development program. It supports emerging creatives in outer-suburban and regional Australia. The program links artists with industry to create environments in which they can thrive. The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR), through Creative Victoria, partnered with GRID to deliver a program in Geelong in 2024 and 2025.

Geelong is one of Victoria's most culturally diverse regions. However, its outer suburbs also include many disadvantaged communities. Financial and cultural barriers make it harder for people from these communities to get involved in the music sector.

In 2024, the GRID Series, with support from the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, gave 5 Geelong-based emerging artists the chance to produce a track, with mentoring help from a team of producers, engineers, songwriters, filmmakers and industry experts. Participants learned new skills that will help them find a sustainable career path, film content to support the release of their track and perform live in Geelong and beyond.

Born in Dandenong to parents of southern Indian heritage, singer Gloria Ragesh aka Wild Gloriosa created the track 'Lover Girl'. She also made a film of the same name that explored her relationship with music and creative identity. She says, 'GRID helped me gain my confidence back ... It was also really nice to be connected with so many incredible people who are not only talented but kind and very community minded.'

Gloria has since performed at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, Queenscliff Music Festival and has supported the likes of Jessica Mauboy and The Bamboos. She is working on an EP, supported by a Creative Victoria Music Works grant, which will be released in 2025. She won the 2024 Music Victoria Diaspora Award as well as the 2025 APRA AMCOS Profession Development Award.

Baraka The Kid, an afropop and hip-hop fusion performer, created 'All My Life', a song about his upbringing and appreciation of his mother. The song accompanies a short film of the same name that gave audiences a more in-depth insight into his story as a refugee living and working in regional Victoria. He sings in both English and Swahili to showcase his heritage and birthright and the language of his home in Australia. 'Everyone who was a part of the program has had an impact of my life in one way or another ... I have learned and gained so much more wisdom from each and every [mentor],' says Baraka.

Baraka is now working on an Afro pop/Afrobeat EP that will fuse hip-hop, pop and R&B. He was nominated in the Best Hip Hop category and Best Regional Act category at the 2024 Music Victoria Awards. He also recently performed at the Australian Open as part of their entertainment offering.



Image: Gloria Ragesh aka Wild Gloriosa



Image: Baraka The Kid

Promoting human rights in government departments

The Victorian Government is building multicultural capacity within our departments and embedding human rights knowledge and practices at every level of government.

All Victorian government departments have been part of the Charter Education Program led by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). The program helps to build a culture of human rights across the Victorian public service.

The following section sets out the initiatives undertaken by individual departments.

Department of Education

DE mandated an e-learning module to introduce staff to the Charter of Human Rights during their induction. This included the Charter's relationship to their work. Throughout the year, the department builds on this foundational knowledge by acknowledging and encouraging participation in events and days that promote diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness.

In 2023–24, DE promoted Cultural Diversity Week, Human Rights Week and Human Rights Day to staff through its Corporate News. DE encouraged staff to celebrate these events by participating in the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's week of daily actions and attending relevant events and training.

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

DEECA participated in the Charter Education Program in 2023–24.

This included tailored sessions in the Regions, Environment, Climate Action and First Peoples Group. Modules focused on:

- understanding how the Charter operates in Victoria
- building knowledge of protected human rights
- mapping decision making under the Charter and identifying ways to embed and improve practice
- identifying the public sector's Charter obligations and how human rights can be lawfully limited

- exploring relevant scenarios to apply human rights in day-to-day work
- knowing where to go for more information and resources.

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

DFFH mandated an e-learning module during induction to introduce staff to the Charter of Human Rights and its relationship to their work.

DFFH also takes part in annual events that celebrate human rights, including:

- Cultural Diversity Week
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Human Rights Day
- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia
- International Day of People with Disability
- International Women's Day
- NAIDOC Week
- Reconciliation Week.

Fairer Victoria also promoted diversity and inclusion in policy and program development across the Victorian Government.

DFFH was the Oceanic Pacific Region's Regional Convening Partner (RCP) for the 2023 Women Deliver Global Conference (WD2023). DFFH contributed \$1.167 million to support key responsibilities of this role.

In this role, Victoria partnered with the Commonwealth Government to convene a diverse regional committee comprising Australian and Pacific-based non-governmental partners. The committee prepared shared regional advocacy for this global conference.

As part of this work, Victoria also hosted an inclusive regional event in Melbourne and led a delegation of representatives from Australia and the Pacific to the WD2023 conference in Kigali in July 2023.

Department of Government Services

DGS's Charter Education Program work in 2023–24 included:

- Commissioner briefing for the Board of Management
- intensive programs for legal staff
- briefings for executive leaders on their responsibilities under the Charter
- promoting the VPS Charter webinar series for all employees
- mandatory e-learning module for all staff on the Charter of Human Rights.

To ensure efficient and accessible registration, Births, Deaths and Marriages improved services and streamlined processes for priority communities, including:

- case management support for WEstjustice and the Wyndham Community and Education Centre (WCEC) to help refugee migrants during the name-change process
- increasing frontline staff and digitisation to reduce application turnaround times (from 105 days to just 12) and call centre wait times.

Department of Health

Every DH employee has a role to promote a human rights culture at work. During 2023–24, the department provided mandatory human rights e-learning on Charter responsibilities. All new starters must complete the module as part of their induction, and every 2 years as a refresher. During 2023–24, 1,006 staff successfully completed the training.

DH staff also had access to unconscious bias training and to the intensive Charter Capability Program delivered over 4 sessions.

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

DJSIR actively supports human rights, including for multicultural communities. DJSIR staff have access to tailored learning, guides and resources, events and activities that help them act in accordance with the Charter.

DJSIR encourages all staff to complete the first 3 modules in the VEOHRC online education program, which cover:

- introducing the Charter
- rights and obligations under the Charter
- embedding a human rights culture in Victoria.

DJSIR also provides staff with the *Charter guide for public sector workers* to help them understand their responsibilities and how to implement human rights.

The department celebrates annual human rights events, such as Cultural Diversity Week, Refugee Week, Human Rights Week and the International Day of Human Rights.

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Youth justice operational staff received training on the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act as part of their induction. This ensures they understand the rights of children and young people. All training and practice instructions also reflect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition, DJCS strengthened anti-vilification laws to protect more Victorians from hate speech and conduct. It also undertook extensive consultation with the Victorian community, including with multicultural and multifaith communities, on potential reforms to Victoria's existing anti-vilification laws.

The proposed reforms protect and promote human rights by:

- extending anti-vilification protections to more Victorians
- improving how serious vilification offences and civil protections operate
- expanding VEOHRC's powers to better respond to vilification.

DJCS published a report on the outcomes of the consultation on the Engage Victoria website in May 2024.

Department of Premier and Cabinet

DPC's Charter Education Program work in 2023–24 included:

- Commissioner briefing for the Board of Management
- intensive programs for legal staff
- briefings for executive leaders on their responsibilities under the Charter
- promoting the VPS Charter webinar series for all employees
- mandatory eLearning module for all staff on the Charter of Human Rights.

DPC also acknowledges key annual events that celebrate human rights, including:

- Cultural Diversity Week
- Human Rights Day
- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia
- International Day of People with Disability
- International Women's Day
- NAIDOC Week
- Reconciliation Week.

In 2023–24, DPC's Multicultural Affairs portfolio worked with the Treaty and First Peoples portfolio on Victoria's first anti-racism strategy. The strategy provides a 5-year roadmap to reducing racism in all forms – interpersonal, institutional and structural.

Department of Transport and Planning

All DTP staff must complete e-learning modules on the Charter. This includes a specific module for people leaders in the organisation.

In 2023–24, DTP provided 2 in-person Charter Education Program sessions to the Legal and Governance Division and the Inclusion and Diversity Branch.

DTP celebrates annual human rights events, including:

- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- International Day of People with Disability
- International Women's Day
- NAIDOC Week.

Department of Treasury and Finance

DGS ran the Charter Education Program for DTF employees in 2024, which included:

- Commissioner briefing for the Board of Management
- briefings for executive leaders on their responsibilities under the Charter
- promoting the VPS Charter webinar series for all employees
- mandatory e-learning module for all staff on the Charter of Human Rights.



Progress on departmental cultural diversity plans

Cultural diversity plans (CDPs) help Victorian government departments provide more inclusive, accessible, and responsive services to multicultural and multifaith communities. They cover many areas, including:

- workforce diversity
- engagement
- participation
- inclusion
- cultural competency in service delivery.

Departments report their progress on their CDPs every year, in line with the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*. **Table 6** shows the status of departmental CDPs as at 30 June 2024.

Table 6: Department cultural diversity plans

| Department | Cultural diversity plan status |
|---|--|
| Department of Education | <i>2023–2027 cultural diversity plan</i> |
| Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action | <i>Diversity and inclusion strategy 2019–2022</i> Plans to update this strategy are underway |
| Department of Families, Fairness and Housing | <i>Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–2027</i> |
| Department of Health | <i>Multicultural health action plan 2023–27</i> |
| Department of Government Services | <i>Diversity, equity and inclusion roadmap 2024–2026</i> |
| Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions | <i>Cultural diversity plan 2018–2024</i> |
| Department of Justice and Community Safety | <i>Multicultural and multifaith action plan 2023–2027</i> |
| Department of Premier and Cabinet | <i>Diversity and inclusion strategy 2019–2021</i> Plans to update this strategy are underway |
| Department of Transport and Planning | <i>Inclusion and diversity strategy 2020–2024</i> |
| Department of Treasury and Finance | <i>Diversity and inclusion framework 2021–2025</i> Plans to update this strategy are underway |

Departmental cultural diversity plans

Department of Education 2023–2027 cultural diversity plan

Vision

DE's CDP identifies 4 focus areas for the department's culturally sensitive services:

- early childhood participation
- student learning and wellbeing
- intercultural capability in schools
- workforce diversity and professional learning.

The focus areas bring together the department's work under current strategic reforms. These aim to improve outcomes for children and young people with multicultural and multifaith backgrounds.

Goals

DE's CDP has 4 objectives that reflect the focus areas:

- **early childhood participation** – improved participation in early childhood education for culturally diverse children, families and carers
- **student learning and wellbeing** – foster a culturally safe and equitable school education system
- **intercultural capability in schools** – build the intercultural capability of school leaders, teachers and students
- **workforce diversity and professional learning** – support cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in our early childhood, school education and corporate workforces, and promote professional learning.

Governance and ownership

DE's Culture, People and Integrity Committee and Executive Board oversee the CDP.

DE has an action register to track actions on the CDP's focus areas. Each CDP action includes a measure of progress for CDP services. DE also considers these collectively against the focus areas and objectives.

Cultural competence training

DE promotes cultural diversity in its workforce and leadership, in accordance with equal opportunity and diversity practices across the VPS.

The department provides information and resources to help staff to build their knowledge and capability about cultural diversity. This includes an intranet page and online resources to foster cultural competency and tackling racism at work. These resources outline suggested actions, inclusive language techniques for communicating across cultures and information about DE's e-learning courses.

In 2023–24, the department became a member of Diversity Council Australia.

In addition to ongoing internal training, DE now provides even more events and resources to support staff to create respectful, safe and inclusive workplaces.

DE's professional development programs, such as its corporate mentoring program, have diversity and inclusion as a key success factor. This program includes diversity and inclusion in training sessions for both mentors and mentees. It highlights the extra hurdles in career development that people from minority groups may experience. It also promotes culturally safe and sensitive conversations in mentoring relationships.

DE provides training for staff and leaders to build their confidence and capability with diversity and inclusion. The department's Respectful Workplaces Program provides e-learning modules as part of its induction program for all new staff (in corporate and schools). Staff also complete these modules regularly after induction. The modules cover:

- respectful workplaces
- human rights and responsibilities
- equal opportunities
- workplace bullying
- DE values.

All staff have access to additional modules covering topics including:

- sexual harassment
- leading a respectful workplace
- addressing concerns, complaints, and serious behaviours (for managers)
- inclusive recruitment
- anti-racism – provided by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

DE provides face-to-face training sessions on cultural competence. These include:

- active bystander training
- anti-racism empowerment
- human rights training
- Aboriginal cultural awareness
- Aboriginal cultural safety.

As demand for highly skilled early childhood and school education professionals continues to rise, DE is implementing workforce initiatives to support diversity, inclusion and equity. These initiatives will continue to evolve over the life of the CDP to respond to complex needs across policy and practice.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DE works directly with community stakeholders and organisations to conduct program and policy development. The department expects that program areas will consult directly with multicultural community stakeholders and organisations during this process.

Internally, the department consults with staff networks to gain lived experience insights. This helps us make decisions about policies and projects. These networks include network member meetings, community of practice meetings and Culture, People and Integrity Committee meetings.

During 2023–24, African Australian Network members attended a performance and development planning information session in September 2024. Network members provided feedback, which resulted in the redevelopment of resources to address negative behaviours in the workplace. A revised guide to support staff to respond to microaggressions will be released in 2025.

The department also engaged with the Women of Colour Network, which provided feedback about how the department can support women from under-represented groups. This resulted in a series of career development workshop tailored for women of colour. The workshops will be delivered from February to April 2025.

Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action Diversity and inclusion strategy 2019–2022

Vision

DEECA is creating a culture that embraces individual differences in all forms. It fosters innovation and inclusion. This supports:

- liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities and thriving natural environments
- all staff to achieve their full potential and work in a flexible way that meets their needs
- a community charter that emphasises the diversity and inclusion values of building enduring and genuine partnerships.

Goals

The goals of DEECA's diversity and inclusion strategy are to:

- improve service delivery and decision making through strong, inclusive leadership, and training and development opportunities
- foster attitudes and practices that better support diversity and inclusion
- create opportunities to recruit and retain staff from diverse groups in the community
- use an intersectional lens to develop diversity and inclusion initiatives that address systemic barriers to social cohesion and equity.

Governance and ownership

The People and Culture Division consults broadly on decisions relating to the diversity and inclusion strategy. This includes changes to department policies, procedures and processes.

Departmental stakeholders include:

- DEECA's staff-led networks
- People and Culture's leadership team and Stewardship Committee
- the Workforce People Partners Working Group
- the Executive Board.

The Manager, Diversity and Inclusion, drives key commitments in the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Two voluntary staff-led networks, Multicultural@DELWP and DEECA's Women of Colour Network, inform and progress the diversity and inclusion strategy and its related action plans.

For an intersectionality lens, DEECA also consults with other staff-led networks, including:

- Place of Pride
- All Abilities Network
- Emerging Professionals Network
- Aboriginal Staff-led Network
- Women in STEM.

The department consults with broader VPS-wide networks.

Cultural competence training

DEECA delivered the following initiatives to support increased cultural competence:

- diversity and inclusion learning opportunities for new staff through the new starter induction program
- Charter of Human Rights training and resources for all staff through the VEOHRC
- the DEECA Women of Colour network mentoring program
- safe and respectful training for all staff including the Charter of Human Rights and diversity and inclusion principles
- navigating recruitment e-learning to embed knowledge of bias, discrimination, inclusion and diversity throughout the recruitment and onboarding process
- the Multicultural@DEECA staff-led network
- SBS inclusion and cultural competency training modules for all staff.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DEECA's Community Charter helps the department build better relationships with stakeholders and communities, including:

- local councils
- catchment management authorities
- water corporations
- the building industry
- environment groups.

The department uses local networks, processes, tools and resources to improve interactions and engagement in policy planning and delivery of programs and projects.

The charter reflects the department's unique relationship with First Peoples as rights holders and embodies a strong commitment to self-determination. This requires the department to be culturally capable and safe and recognise and embrace Aboriginal decision making.

DEECA's Engage@DEECA framework enables:

- more confident and effective engagement
- stronger relationships with multicultural communities
- more informed decision making.

The current framework is being reviewed. Once complete, the review will bring the framework in line with the whole of VPS engagement framework.

Public engagement framework

Engage Victoria is guided by the Victorian Public Engagement Framework (PEF), which was developed by Digital Victoria in consultation with the Victorian public.

The PEF strengthens engagement practice in Victoria. It provides principles, a how-to guide and measurement for community engagement evaluation. It was endorsed by the Public Sector Administration Committee in October 2021 and is being progressively rolled out across departments and agencies.

DEECA's Community Charter helps the department build better relationships with stakeholders and communities by leveraging local networks, processes, tools and resources. This improves interactions and engagement in policy planning. It also informs delivery of programs and projects.

DEECA's Engage@DEECA framework enables:

- more confident and effective engagement
- stronger relationships with multicultural communities
- more informed decision making.

The current framework is being reviewed. Once complete, the review will bring the framework in line with the VPS-wide engagement framework.

The department has also developed an internal gender equality action plan and conducts external facing gender impact assessments as part of key diversity and inclusion initiatives. These initiatives adopt a strong intersectional lens, considering multicultural perspectives and initiative impacts.

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing *Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–2027*

Vision

DFFH's CDP vision is:

- We will be a proactive leader in diversity and inclusion.
- We will empower people to express their identity and belong.
- We will remove structural and systemic barriers so that everyone can reach their full potential in a safe, equitable and respectful workplace.
- We will create a department that embodies inclusive leadership, celebrates diversity of thought and reflects the diversity of the communities we serve so we can better support them.

Goals

DFFH's CDP goals ensure:

- DFFH's leadership profile, governance structures and workforce reflect the community's diversity, and all employees are accountable for creating an inclusive workplace
- the department empowers the voices of its diverse workforce, values diversity of thought and creates a workplace where all employees are supported to develop and progress their careers
- diverse people's lived experience is core to policy, programs and services, to improve business practices and outcomes for the diverse communities it serves
- culturally safe actions are embedded into systems and practices as the norm
- work environments are accessible and safe, with prevention, early intervention and suitable responses to discrimination and inappropriate behaviours
- DFFH has transparency, accountability, and measurable targets to achieve its CDP outcomes.

Governance and ownership

DFFH has established an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee to focus on organisational diversity and inclusion in the department. This includes gender equality.

The committee:

- oversees the department's *Diversity and inclusion framework* and *Gender equality action plan*
- holds the department to account for undertaking coordinated action
- monitors progress on equality, diversity and inclusion and acts if progress is not being made
- provides a report to the DFFH Board annually against relevant outcomes, strategies and measures
- authorises changes to the *Diversity and inclusion framework* and implementation plan, in consultation with its diverse staff community of practice.

The committee comprises staff with lived experience of diversity and an accountable executive member who informs and influences decisions.

Cultural competence training

All departmental staff must complete the mandatory Workforce Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Aboriginal Cultural Safety e-learning training. This course builds staff understanding and knowledge of diversity, including for:

- Aboriginal peoples
- people with disabilities
- people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender-diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) employee communities.

Staff receive unconscious bias training in both e-learning and instructor-led formats.

Anti-racism training is mandatory for staff who lead others. It is delivered by an instructor.

All executives have a diversity performance outcome in their personal development plans to improve diversity and inclusion across the department.

The following projects were completed in 2023–24 to support cultural competence at DFFH:

- staff language allowance, in alignment with the VPS enterprise agreement for 2024 to recognise the cultural and linguistic skills we need to deliver better services to our communities
- LGBTIQ+ grievance officers and confidential contacts with lived experience who provide dedicated support to staff
- manager's guide to onboarding diverse staff

- 6-session employee network capability training with a micro-certification for all our employee networks to strengthen governance and build skills
- launch of DFFH Women of Colour Network
- instructor-led autism and ADHD at work for managers and team leaders, and disability confidence training for all staff across the department.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DFFH supports consumers, carers, communities and people from multicultural backgrounds to make decisions about their health and wellbeing through policies, guidelines and approaches. This includes:

- consulting with stakeholders on policy and program design
- developing in-language resources
- ensuring translators are provided where required
- supporting bicultural workers to engage with communities
- building the capacity of departmental staff to better engage diverse communities.

The department's diverse staff community of practice meets bimonthly to provide an ongoing voice for diverse employees. The community of practice includes representatives with lived experience from DFFH's diverse workforce who serve on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. Nominated representatives report to the committee on risks and issues around the progress of the framework and its implementation plan.

The department also launched its Women of Colour Network to create a safe and inclusive space for women of colour to contribute to policies and programs that better meet the needs of communities.

The department provides employment pathways for refugees and people seeking asylum, particularly through the CareerSeekers Internship initiative. This initiative brings people from diverse communities into the public service. After the program, 75% of participants secure ongoing employment at the department or in the health and human services sector. They provide valuable lived experiences that inform decision making.

The department also provided internships for graduates from Western Chances to provide opportunities for young people in the workforce.

Department of Health

Multicultural health action plan 2023–27

Vision

DH's vision is that Victorians are the healthiest people in the world. To achieve this, the department has implemented its new *Multicultural health action plan 2023–27*. The vision of this plan is to ensure multicultural communities can access culturally competent healthcare and experience equitable health outcomes.

Goals

There are 6 improvement goals in the department's plan:

- invest in targeted policies, programs and services that improve health equity
- design and deliver accessible and culturally competent mainstream policies, programs, and services
- provide language services and accessible communications
- strengthen community engagement, capacity building and lived experience representation
- enhance cultural competency through workforce capability and inclusive leadership
- build evidence-based approaches through data, research and evaluation.

Improvement goals are interconnected. Collective advancement across all goals will improve health outcomes for multicultural communities and achieve the department's vision.

Governance and ownership

The department's Executive Board is responsible for overseeing the *Multicultural health action plan 2023–27*. This includes ensuring the plan is embedded in the department's core business.

Cultural competence training

DH implements workforce strategies that aim to build a diverse workforce that reflects the community they serve. These strategies also aim to create a positive, inclusive and culturally safe workplace that is a comfortable and productive environment for all staff.

All departmental staff must complete e-learning on workforce diversity, equity and inclusion. This course increases understanding and knowledge, including for:

- Aboriginal people
- people with disabilities

- people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- LGBTIQA+ communities.

Staff can also receive e-learning and face-to-face unconscious bias training.

Five cultural competency education sessions are available to DH staff. These cover topics that reflect the *Multicultural health action plan 2023–27*, including:

- providing language services, accessible communications and translation
- strengthening community engagement, capacity building and lived experience
- enhancing cultural competency through workforce capability.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

Multicultural communities shape the programs and policies that impact them as consumers, carers and communities. DH does this by:

- consulting stakeholders on policy and program design
- developing in-language resources
- ensuring interpreters are provided where required
- supporting bicultural workers to engage with communities
- building the capacity of departmental staff to better engage diverse communities.

DH also facilitates the CALD Health Advisory Group, which met quarterly in 2023–24. The group provides:

- advice on public health policy, research, programs and services, as well as current and emerging issues impacting culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- advice and support on emergency preparedness, response and social recovery efforts
- support for key public health messages and advice on communication and engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions *Multicultural diversity action plan 2018–2024*

Vision

The action plan's vision is to:

- foster a culturally diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects the sectors and communities we work with
- provide inclusive service delivery to culturally diverse clients and communities that fosters greater inclusion in Victoria's economy.

Goals

The action plan has 3 goals:

- **Leadership:** Our leaders will champion the CDP to foster engagement at all levels. We will all support cultural diversity through ownership at all levels.
- **Information building:** We will build our understanding of internal cultural diversity. We will build our understanding of the cultural diversity of the communities we work with.
- **A culturally diverse workforce:** We will support opportunities to grow cultural diversity at all levels of the organisation. Our workforce will reflect the communities we work with.

Governance and ownership

The Executive Director, People and Culture, in Corporate Services oversees the CDP.

The CDP is part of the department's *Diversity, Equality and inclusion framework*. The framework's progress is monitored and reviewed by the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee, a subcommittee of the Executive Board.

Cultural competence training

All staff are encouraged to develop their cultural competence through professional development opportunities.

In 2023–24, staff had access to cultural competence training opportunities including:

- a cultural competence eLearning program on the DJSIR learning management system
- a suite of cultural diversity online courses from LinkedIn Learning
- presentations and panel discussions organised by DJSIR's staff-led People of Colour Network.

All departmental hiring managers must complete online unconscious bias training before conducting job interviews.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DJSIR's CDP requires that all business areas consult with the community when evaluating programs and services. We do this by:

- consulting with culturally diverse communities and advisory boards when making decisions about programs, policies and services that directly affect culturally diverse communities
- using available demographic and service data on cultural diversity to support decision making for programs, policies and service delivery
- embedding cultural diversity considerations when designing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs and services.

Department of Justice and Community Safety Multicultural and multifaith action plan 2023–2027

Vision

A justice and community safety system that is inclusive, equitable, culturally responsive and values people from multicultural and multifaith communities.

Goals

There are 6 goals under DJCS's *Multicultural and multifaith action plan*:

- **Improving data** – improve our collection and analysis of client and staff experiences to ensure evidence-based reform of systems, structures and practices, and improve outcomes for people from multicultural and multifaith communities.
- **Building capability and capacity** – enhance departmental capability and capacity to create a more inclusive and equitable culture and environment for clients and staff.
- **Equitable pathways to career development and leadership** – support career pathways and opportunities for progression and development for staff from multicultural and multifaith communities.
- **Creating a safer, empowering, and inclusive culture** – build an organisational culture and justice and community safety system where people from multicultural and multifaith communities feel safe, respected, included and valued.

- **Partnering with communities to build stronger policies and programs** – partner with communities in a robust and appropriate way to ensure policies, programs and services are designed and delivered in a way that delivers the intended outcomes.
- **Cultural responsiveness and inclusion are built into all programs and services** – build inclusive and culturally responsive programs, services, and systems so the department achieves its intended outcomes for clients from multicultural and multifaith communities.

Governance and ownership

DJCS's Inclusion and Intersectionality team (which is part of the People, Safety, Culture and Communications Group) is responsible for implementing the action plan. The team works with business units to develop, monitor and report on activities in the plan.

DJCS has a new executive-level governance body to monitor implementation across all diversity and inclusion strategies. This ensures intersectionality is embedded in the department's practices. The Deputy Secretary of People, Safety, Culture and Communications chairs all related meetings.

Cultural competence training

All role-specific training (such as induction programs, mandatory e-learning and professional development programs) includes cultural competency and awareness training. Topics include cultural diversity and human rights awareness.

Other available learning includes unconscious bias and building multicultural relationships.

Learning programs are promoted via the monthly *Justice learning* newsletter, in people-leader communications and can be assigned by leaders to their staff or requested by staff via the department's Learning Management System.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DJCS has an engagement framework that supports its commitment to a just and safe Victoria. The framework is a strategic and practical guide for staff that outlines how, when and why the department engages with its stakeholders.

It ensures the department engages with its stakeholders in a consistent, meaningful, effective and inclusive way.

The framework reflects the department's commitment to embedding partnerships in the design, delivery and evaluation of the Victorian justice and community safety system.

Department of Premier and Cabinet *Diversity and inclusion strategy* 2019–2021¹²

Vision

DPC's workforce is genuinely inclusive and reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. The Department of Government Services' (DGS) Corporate Shared Services supports DPC to develop, implement, monitor and report on DPC's commitments under workforce inclusion.

DPC is committed to diversity, inclusion and equity to ensure that all people:

- are treated with dignity and respect
- have equitable access to employment opportunities and outcomes
- can participate in all aspects of work life
- can achieve their full potential.

Goals

Across the various diversity and inclusion plans, the department aims for:

- visible leadership and accountability for diversity and inclusion
- attracting, developing, and retaining a diverse, gender-balanced and talented workforce
- creating a safe (including culturally safe), respectful and inclusive workplace
- facilitating and promoting a flexible and accessible workplace
- measuring, monitoring, and reporting on diversity and inclusion.

Governance and ownership

The DPC Board of Management oversees diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Board of Management appoints executive champions for all key priority areas including:

- gender
- disability
- LGBTIQA+.

Cultural competence training

The DGS People and Culture team that services DPC provides diversity and inclusion training programs to help employees to:

- understand their rights and responsibilities to create an inclusive environment free from discrimination and harassment, and to identify discrimination and exclusion in the workplace
- understand the complex and varied experiences of diverse communities
- identify and address unconscious bias and their effect on work practices and decisions
- understand and embed the Victorian Charter of Human Rights in their work
- understand and embed Aboriginal cultural safety and self-determination in their work.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DPC engages with various networks including:

- Aboriginal Staff Network
- Combined Enablers Network (DPC, DGS and DTF)
- LGBTIQA+ Network (DPC and DGS).

Department of Transport *Inclusion and diversity strategy 2020–2024*

Vision

Inclusion is embedded into our workplace culture so that we feel a sense of belonging to DTP, are empowered to contribute fully to the organisation's success and so that we represent the rich and diverse needs of the Victorian community.

Goals

Goals include:

- leader awareness/participation – our leaders attend awareness-raising initiatives such as training and events
- employee understanding – our employees recognise bias, stereotypes, exclusion and inappropriate behaviour and feel confident to take effective bystander action
- employee engagement – people who identify as belonging to one of our five priority diversity groups are equally engaged as the overall workforce
- workforce composition – our workforce reflects the diversity of the Victorian community
- absenteeism, resignations, promotions, seniority – the proportion of employees from our 5 priority diversity groups mirrors the overall trends for the department

¹² This strategy is in review, and DGS is developing a new diversity and inclusion strategy that will cover DGS, DPC and DTF, planned for release in late 2025. This

strategy remains in place until a new plan is approved and published.

- zero tolerance towards bullying and discrimination – a decrease in number of bullying and discrimination complaints (both formal and informal) made over the duration of the strategy
- benchmarking results – our rankings in national benchmarking indexes improve over the duration of the strategy (such as the AWEL, the Australian Network on Disability's Access & inclusion Index, Diversity Council of Australia's (DCA) Inclusion@YourWork Index)
- community perception – DTP is seen as an employer of choice for people from our five priority diversity groups and DTP's services are relevant and responsive to the needs of the Victorian community
- intersectional lens – work towards employees applying an intersectional lens to their work (for example, an audit of our website reveals that the information is accessible to those with disability in addition to those who speak a language other than English).

Governance and ownership

The Inclusion and Organisational Development branch partners closely with a variety of internal stakeholders to assist in implementing and tracking progress against DTP's aim of creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace culture. During 2023–24, DTP reported to an Inclusion and Diversity Council. This helped to accelerate the strategy's impact and to work collaboratively to address problems and remove individual, organisational and systemic barriers.

Cultural competence training

From July 2020 onwards, core foundation training called 'Inclusion fundamentals and unconscious bias' has been delivered to DTP employees. This 5-hour training includes modules on:

- unconscious bias
- bystander action and inclusive leadership
- fostering cultural humility
- cultural awareness
- the impact of racism on culturally diverse staff in the workplace.

DTP encourages staff to complete e-learning modules on cultural competency. The Cultural Diversity e-learning module covers key topics, including:

- cross-cultural communication – navigating conversations and interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds
- cultural adaptation – understanding how cultural differences influence behaviour and learning how to adapt
- population trends and their impact in Australia – exploring demographic shifts and their implications for society and the workplace.

Employees have other training opportunities through LinkedIn Learning courses that complement internal programs, such as:

- cultivating cultural competency
- supporting allyship and anti-racism at work.

These modules provide foundational knowledge to build more inclusive and respectful work environments.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

Community engagement is designed and implemented to be inclusive of multicultural communities that are affected by departmental decisions. DTP uses the International Association of Public Association's spectrum of public participation and a range of engagement methods including:

- social media
- website project updates
- surveys
- community meetings
- consultation committees
- translator services.

In developing workforce-focused policies, processes, and programs, feedback and contributions are sought from the CaLD Employee-led Network (Employee Resource Group, ERG) to ensure the final products are informed by those with lived experience.

Department of Treasury and Finance *Diversity and inclusion framework* 2021–2025¹³

Vision

DTF's *Diversity and inclusion framework 2021–2025* embeds a diverse and inclusive culture across the department that reflects the diversity of the Victorian population.

Goals

The framework complements other whole-of-Victorian Government initiatives including the Getting to Work disability employment plan and the Barring Djinang Aboriginal employment plan.

The framework has 6 goals:

- acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land across Victoria, value self-determination for Aboriginal people and support reconciliation
- remove barriers so people with disability can fully participate and excel
- promote a culture of gender equity, diversity and respect where people of all genders are supported to succeed
- ensure the LGBTIQ+ community is visibly recognised and included
- celebrate cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, and create a workforce that reflects the diverse Victorian community we serve
- enable people of all ages to participate and pursue career development opportunities.

Governance and ownership

The framework is overseen by DTF's People Committee, which reports to the DTF Board.

Cultural competence training

All staff complete mandatory training on ensuring fair workplaces, preventing sexual harassment, code of conduct, human rights, and disability awareness as part of their corporate induction.

The department supports its staff to participate in VPS employee-led networks, which give employees an opportunity to connect with peers across the public service and improve cultural capabilities.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DTF consults with key stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to monitor and evaluate programs.

Department of Government Services *Diversity equity and inclusion roadmap* 2024–26

Vision

DGS provides a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace where all people feel like they belong – regardless of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or other attributes.

DGS treats all people with dignity and respect. This includes equitable access to employment opportunities and outcomes, participating in all aspects of work life, and achieving their full potential.

Goals

The roadmap outlines the department's commitment to a safe, diverse, equitable and inclusive working environment that:

- acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Victoria, values self-determination for Aboriginal people, provides a culturally safe work environment, and supports reconciliation
- removes barriers so that people with disability, and their carers, can fully participate and reach their full potential
- promotes a culture of gender equity, diversity and respect where people of all genders are supported to succeed
- ensures that the LGBTIQ+ community is visibly recognised and included
- celebrates cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, and creates a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Victorian community that we serve
- enables people of all ages, and with various caring responsibilities, to participate and pursue career development.

¹³ This strategy is in review, and DGS is developing a new diversity and inclusion strategy that will cover DGS, DPC and DTF, planned for release in late 2025. This strategy

remains in place until a new plan is approved and published.

Inclusion and accessibility are at the heart of everything the department does. This includes:

- visible leadership and accountability
- attracting, retaining, and developing a diverse and culturally safe workforce
- ensuring equity in the workplace
- creating a respectful, inclusive, and safe workforce
- measurement, progress and reporting.

Governance and ownership

The DGS Deputy Secretary Corporate Shared Services has oversight of the roadmap, and the DGS Board of Management has responsibility for its progress.

Progress is monitored using DGS employee data and annual People Matter Survey data.

Reporting on progress is undertaken via:

- DGS Board of Management
- DGS Annual Report
- Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
- the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector under the requirements of the *Gender Equality Act*
- the Victorian Secretaries Board via a consolidated report coordinated by the VPSC on progress against *Getting to Work: Victorian Public Sector Disability Action Plan*
- the Self-Determination Reform Framework.

Cultural competence training

DGS provides opportunities to help employees to:

- understand their rights and responsibilities to create an inclusive environment free from discrimination and harassment, and to identify discrimination and exclusion in the workplace
- understand their role in and strategies for creating a diverse and inclusive workplace
- understand the complex and varied experiences of diverse communities
- identify and address unconscious bias and their effect on work practices and decisions
- understand and embed the Victorian Charter of Human Rights in their work.

These opportunities are available via mandatory e-learning, department and VPS-wide webinars, Charter of Human Rights training program, Employee Hub and Manager Hub content, and relevant LinkedIn Learning courses.

In partnership with the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, DGS ran the Charter of Human Rights (the Charter) Education Program for employees in 2024, which included:

- Commissioner briefing for the Board of Management
- intensive training tailored for legal staff
- briefings for executive leaders on their responsibilities under the Charter
- promoting the VPS Charter webinar series for all employees, which considered the Charter in relation to specific topics, such as children's rights and LGBTIQA+ rights
- mandatory eLearning on the Charter of Human Rights.

Decision-making processes and program evaluation

DGS consults with employees, leaders and other stakeholders in the development of DEI initiatives.

In the next phase of establishing the DEI function, strategy, policy and process framework, the department is engaging in broad consultation to better understand the experience and needs of the diverse workforce. This consultation includes senior leaders, staff networks, employees, managers, and analysis of employee experiences of different cohorts where possible via results of the annual People Matter Survey.

DGS staff networks include the:

- First Peoples Staff Network
- Enablers Network (DPC, DGS and DTF)
- LGBTIQA+ Network (DPC and DGS).

Appendix 1: Multicultural representation on government boards, authorities, and committees

Table 7: Composition of Victorian Government boards as at 30 June 2024¹⁴

| Composition | Number/percentage |
|---|-------------------|
| Number of boards as at June 2024 | 352 |
| Board appointments | 3016 |
| Culturally diverse appointments | 1109 |
| Culturally diverse percentage of boards | 36.77% |

Table 8: Appointments and reappointments to Victorian Government boards as at 30 June 2024

| Appointment | Number/percentage |
|---|-------------------|
| Number of boards with new appointments or reappointments in 2023–24 | 270 |
| New appointments or reappointments | 1091 |
| Culturally diverse appointments or reappointments | 425 |
| Culturally diverse percentage of appointments and reappointments | 38.96% |

¹⁴ Data for tables 7 to 9 provided by VPSC. Data excludes cemeteries, school councils and small committees of Crown Land Management. Where the *Public Administration Act 2004* status is neither public entity nor special body, and where DPC classification is not applicable, the data is not reported. Figures may differ to previously published data for prior years due to ongoing remediation, increased completeness of data, and/or an appointee's decision to disclose additional characteristics or no longer disclose certain characteristics. Data includes machinery of government changes which can affect departmental figures compared with numbers provided in previous years' publications and reports.

Table 9: Year-on-year proportion of Victorian government department board appointments or members with culturally diverse backgrounds

| Department | At 30 June 2024 (%) | At 30 June 2023(%) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Department of Education | 24.7 | 24.4 |
| Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action | 38.73 | 35.13 |
| Department of Families, Fairness and Housing | 30 | 28.65 |
| Department of Government Services | 18.37 | 19.18 |
| Department of Health | 36.75 | 33.8 |
| Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions | 40.37 | 39.03 |
| Department of Justice and Community Safety | 36.71 | 32.87 |
| Department of Premier and Cabinet | 72.88 | 24.07 ¹⁵ |
| Department of Transport and Planning | 39.81 | 37.24 |
| Department of Treasury and Finance | 20.8 | 21.11 |

¹⁵ Many candidates failed to provide CALD information in 2023 but have since submitted it in 2024, resulting in the absence of CALD data in 2023.

Appendix 2: Indicators

Frequently used abbreviations in this section

- CLS: community language schools
- ESB: English-speaking background
- LBOTE: language background other than English
- MESC: main English-speaking country
- NESB: non-English speaking background¹⁶
- NMESC: non-main English-speaking country

Benefits of diversity

A1 Number of children and students being funded to learn languages in CLS¹⁷

| Year | Number of funded CLS | Number of languages being learned | Total children or students |
|------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2023 | 176 | 48 | 40,712 |
| 2022 | 178 | 52 | 37,240 |

Top 20 government-funded languages being learned in Victorian CLS in 2023

| Language | Number of children or students funded |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Chinese (Mandarin) | 16,802 |
| Greek | 4,234 |
| Arabic | 3,998 |
| Vietnamese | 3,913 |
| Tamil | 1,620 |
| Sinhala | 1,012 |
| Japanese | 851 |
| Dari | 700 |
| Bangla | 639 |
| Russian | 519 |
| Korean | 499 |
| Punjabi | 491 |
| Assyrian | 457 |
| Somali | 424 |
| Cantonese | 410 |
| Persian | 362 |
| Serbian | 359 |
| Urdu | 320 |
| Dinka | 271 |
| Hebrew | 265 |

¹⁶ The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the term NMESC to represent non-main English-speaking countries, while MESC represents main English-speaking countries. MESC are the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and South Africa. NMESC covers all other countries of birth. Where appropriate and specifically relevant, some departments and agencies use the term NESB to stand for non-English speaking background and ESB to stand for English-speaking background. LBOTE stands for language background other than English, while LOTE is for language other than English.

¹⁷ Source: Department of Education 2023 funding data. Data includes preschool and school-aged enrolments.

A2 Students enrolled in VCE language studies (unit 4) in Victorian schools in 2023¹⁸

| Language | Enrolments |
|------------------|------------|
| Chinese Mandarin | 1,981 |
| French | 1,539 |
| Japanese | 983 |
| Italian | 580 |
| German | 427 |
| Indonesian | 348 |
| Vietnamese | 343 |
| Latin | 255 |
| Greek | 196 |
| Arabic | 105 |
| Persian | 103 |
| Spanish | 92 |
| Turkish | 69 |
| Hindi | 55 |
| Punjabi | 48 |
| Tamil | 46 |
| Hebrew | 43 |
| Russian | 38 |

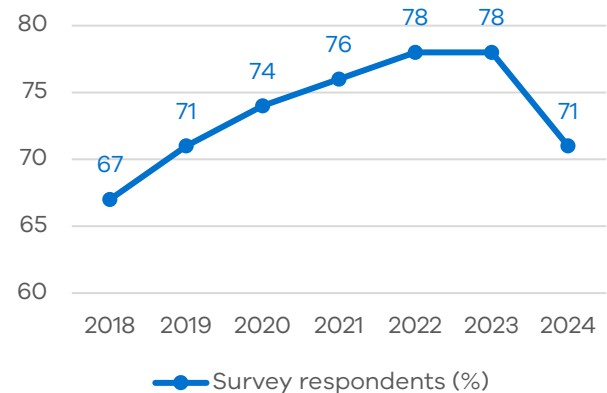
| Language | Enrolments |
|-----------------|------------|
| Khmer | 36 |
| Korean | 31 |
| Auslan | 20 |
| Karen | 20 |
| Serbian | 18 |
| Sinhala | 18 |
| Macedonian | 17 |
| Dutch | 16 |
| Bosnian | 14 |
| Portuguese | 13 |
| Romanian | 12 |
| Polish | 11 |
| Chin Hakha | 10 |
| Classical Greek | 10 |
| Croatian | 9 |
| Filipino | 8 |
| Bengali | 7 |
| Swedish | 7 |

¹⁸ Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023 Satisfactory completion of VCE Units. Enrolments in VCE language studies (Unit 4) in Victorian schools in 2023.

Social cohesion and participation

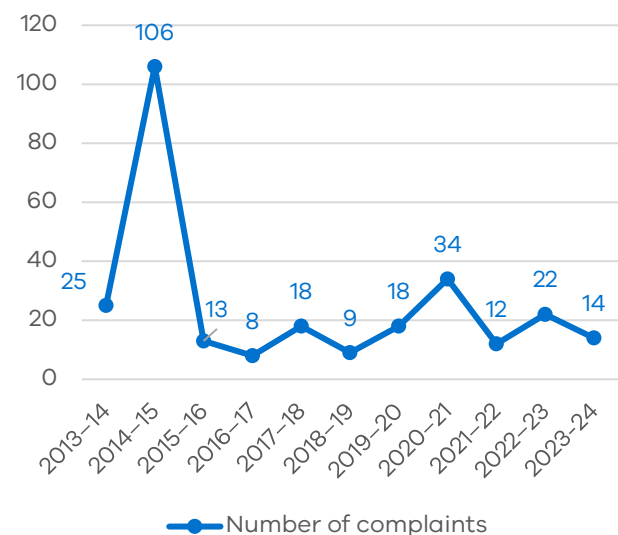
B1 Proportion of survey respondents who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger¹⁹

| Year | Survey respondents (%) |
|------|------------------------|
| 2024 | 71 |
| 2023 | 78 |
| 2022 | 78 |
| 2021 | 76 |
| 2020 | 74 |
| 2019 | 71 |
| 2018 | 67 |



B2 Number of complaints made to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission under the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001²⁰

| Year | Number of complaints |
|---------|----------------------|
| 2023–24 | 14 |
| 2022–23 | 22 |
| 2021–22 | 12 |
| 2020–21 | 34 |
| 2019–20 | 18 |
| 2018–19 | 9 |
| 2017–18 | 18 |
| 2016–17 | 8 |
| 2015–16 | 13 |
| 2014–15 | 106 |
| 2013–14 | 25 |

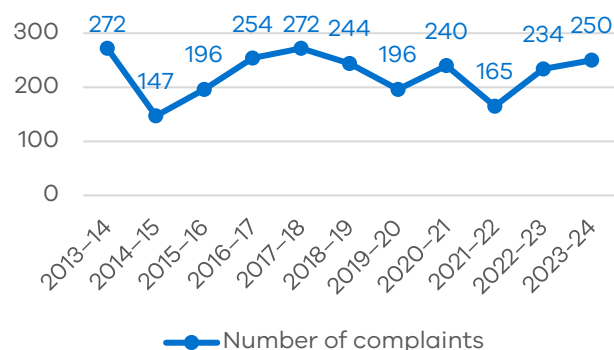


¹⁹ Source: The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Survey reports. The surveys are conducted annually. Results collected earlier than 2018 are not included for comparison because a different survey mode was used.

²⁰ Source: Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The data is collected annually.

B3 Number of complaints made to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in relation to discrimination on the basis of race and religious belief under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010²¹

| Year | Number of complaints |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 2023–24 | 250 |
| 2022–23 ²² | 234 |
| 2021–22 | 165 |
| 2020–21 | 240 |
| 2019–20 | 196 |
| 2018–19 | 244 |
| 2017–18 | 272 |
| 2016–17 | 254 |
| 2015–16 | 196 |
| 2014–15 | 147 |
| 2013–14 | 272 |

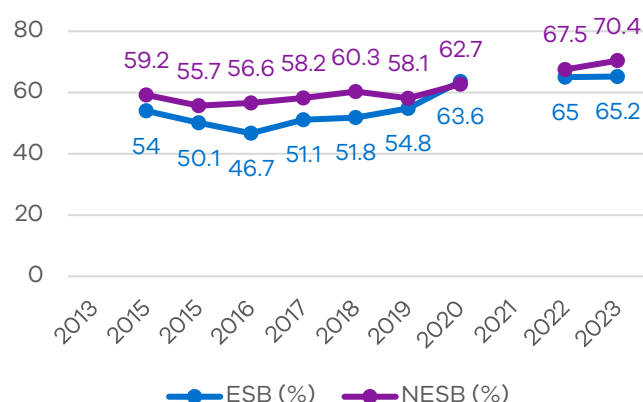


²¹ Source: Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The data is collected annually.

²² Lockdowns during COVID-19 impacted on the number of complaints made. The 2022–23 figure is consistent with pre-COVID levels.

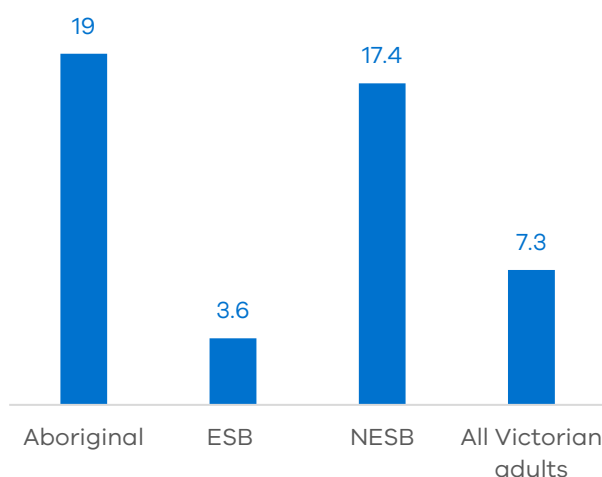
B4 Proportion of Victorians from a non-English speaking background who feel multiculturalism at least sometimes makes life better in their area²³

| Year | ESB (%) | NESB (%) |
|--------------------|---------|----------|
| 2023 | 65.2 | 70.4 |
| 2022 | 65.0 | 67.5 |
| 2021 ²⁴ | N/A | N/A |
| 2020 | 63.6 | 62.7 |
| 2019 | 54.8 | 58.1 |
| 2018 | 51.8 | 60.3 |
| 2017 | 51.1 | 58.2 |
| 2016 | 46.7 | 56.6 |
| 2015 | 50.1 | 55.7 |
| 2014 | 54.0 | 59.2 |
| 2013 ²⁵ | - | - |



B5 Proportion of adults who felt they experienced discrimination or were treated unfairly by others in the past year because of their skin colour, nationality, race, ethnic group or identifying as Aboriginal²⁶

| Ethnicity of adults who experienced racism | Proportion (%) of adults who experienced racism in the past 12 months |
|--|---|
| Aboriginal | 19.0 |
| ESB (only spoke English at home) | 3.6 |
| NESB (spoke a LOTE at home) | 17.4 |
| All Victorian adults | 7.3 |



²³ Source: Department of Health, *Victorian Population Health Survey*. The language of this heading has changed from the previous report.

²⁴ The Victorian Population Health Survey was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey resumed in 2022.

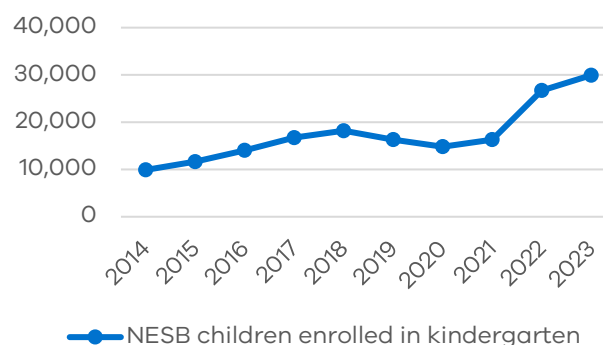
²⁵ No data was available for 2013 because the question was not asked. Data for 2015 onwards cannot be compared with previous years due to a change in survey methodology.

²⁶ Source: Department of Health, *Victorian Population Health Survey*. The language of this heading has changed from the previous report.

Accessible and responsive services

C1 Number of Victorian children from a non-English speaking background enrolled in a Victorian government-funded kindergarten program²⁷

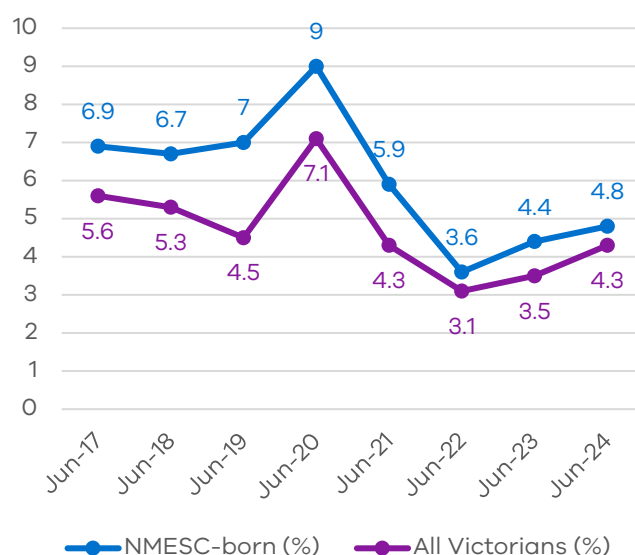
| Year | NESB children enrolled in kindergarten |
|------|--|
| 2023 | 29,941 |
| 2022 | 26,703 |
| 2021 | 16,305 |
| 2020 | 14,818 |
| 2019 | 16,303 |
| 2018 | 18,195 |
| 2017 | 16,741 |
| 2016 | 14,044 |
| 2015 | 11,657 |
| 2014 | 9,904 |



²⁷ Source: Department of Education Kindergarten Census Collection. Data is collected annually. The large increase in 2022 is due to the statewide rollout of 3-year-old kindergarten. The data represents the number of children who were enrolled in a funded kindergarten program and whose family indicated that they speak another main language at home other than English. It is not feasible to calculate a kindergarten participation rate for NESB children because there is no suitable NESB population denominator for children eligible to enrol in 3-year-old or 4-year-old kindergarten. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, there was a system error in the Kindergarten Information Management System. This error has removed the ability for service providers to select 'other' under the question for 'Main language spoken at home (if not English)'. Kindergarten services that would have usually entered data in this field may have left this blank. (In 2018 almost 3,500 children had 'other' entered in this field.)

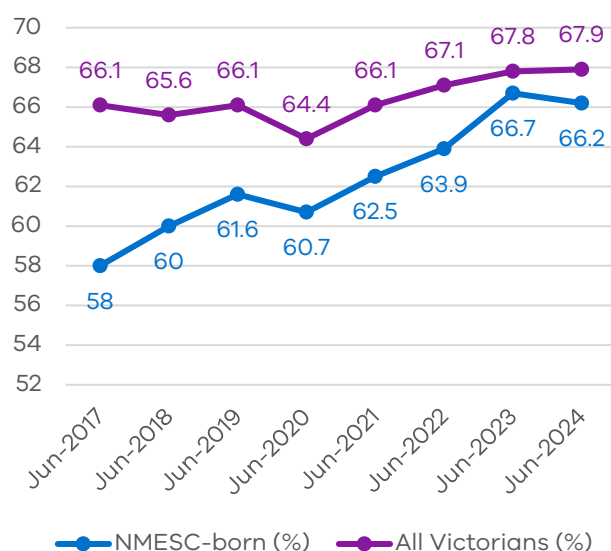
C2 Unemployment rate of Victorians born in non-main English-speaking countries compared with the unemployment rate of all Victorians²⁸

| Year | NMESC-born (%) | All Victorians (%) |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------|
| June 2024 | 4.8 | 4.3 |
| June 2023 | 4.4 | 3.5 |
| June 2022 | 3.6 | 3.1 |
| June 2021 | 5.9 | 4.3 |
| June 2020 | 9.0 | 7.1 |
| June 2019 | 7.0 | 4.5 |
| June 2018 | 6.7 | 5.3 |
| June 2017 | 6.9 | 5.6 |



C3 Workforce participation rate of Victorians born in non-main English-speaking countries compared with the workforce participation rate of all Victorians²⁹

| Year | NMESC-born (%) | All Victorians (%) |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------|
| June 2024 | 66.2 | 67.9 |
| June 2023 | 66.7 | 67.8 |
| June 2022 | 63.9 | 67.1 |
| June 2021 | 62.5 | 66.1 |
| June 2020 | 60.7 | 64.4 |
| June 2019 | 61.6 | 66.1 |
| June 2018 | 60.0 | 65.6 |
| June 2017 | 58.0 | 66.1 |



²⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (December 2024), 'Table 2: Labour force status by State, Territory, Greater capital city, Rest of state (ASGS) and Sex, Australia', accessed 17 February 2025, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/dec-2024#labour-force-status>>.

²⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (December 2024), 'LM7: Labour force status by elapsed years since arrival, main English-speaking countries, sex, state and territory, January 1991 onwards', Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, accessed 17 February 2025, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/dec-2024#labour-force-status>>.

