

# BRMC

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Ballarat Regional  
Multicultural Council Inc.



## Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC)

BRMC actively promotes multiculturalism, intercultural and interfaith harmony, social cohesion and well-being of migrant communities. Our services alleviate hardship and address barriers to full participation. We help build and enable inclusive and diverse communities and economies.

Proudly part of:



**Cover image:** Morning Tea and Parade of Cultures Fashion Parade at Barkly Square

## Acknowledgement of Country

BRMC respectfully acknowledges the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people, their elders and community leaders, past, present and emerging - traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work.





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Image: Ballarat Begonia Festival Parade



# Chairperson's Report

2020 was an extraordinary year for the entire community and specifically for the operation of Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC). Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 restrictions I'm pleased to report that BRMC Board and staff continued to work diligently and adapted to new work and meeting restrictions in a productive and professional manner. Governance and program delivery continued in adaptive formats with online Zoom meetings and restricted face-to-face meetings when permitted.

In addition to Board focus on sound governance, work was undertaken on exploring the possibility of BRMC obtaining Deductible Gift Recipient status (DGR) and development of the Old Ballarat East Library as the new Ballarat Welcome Centre. I'm pleased to report that work is progressing steadily on both projects.

At an operational level BRMC has engaged extensively in the COVID-19 response by communicating information during pandemic restrictive times through social media and direct community contacts; liaising with health and government taskforce to communicate the voice of diverse communities; collaborating with communities to direct fresh food, material aid, information and social support.

Thanks to staff for building capacity across the organisation during the first half of the year with such highlights as Twilight Markets and member celebrations, employment and enterprise development; social support and material aid services delivered face-to-face and online to the most in need: emerging communities and seniors.

Thanks to members who have collaborated across events, forums and festivals including Ballarat African Association - Rebranding African Australia; Ballarat Indian Association - Diwali; Ballarat Hindu Temple and Cultural Centre - Bushfire Relief Fundraiser; City of Ballarat - Begonia Festival; Ballarat Italian Association - material support for emerging communities and language classes.

Thanks to 2019/20 Board members, especially Alma Lapina for her early work as Secretary on our work plans and meetings, and outgoing members Paul Miller and Lokan Ravi who were very active and supportive to the Stepping Stones project and Emergency Relief programs respectively; also wishing Dimitri Dollard well in his new role. Many thanks to Andy Tennant who plied his accounting expertise and professionalism on BRMC accounts and budget. A special tribute to Khushi Maharaj, who passed away in 2020. Khushi served as a Community Representative for many years where he enriched the organisation with his wisdom and carefully chosen words.

Special thanks to Ann Foley for her drive, networking skills and entrepreneurial spirit in always seeking funding opportunities to drive change and growth for BRMC whilst remaining focused on delivering for the neediest members of our community.

Finally, as this is my last term as BRMC Chair I acknowledge the support of all Board members past and present and sincerely thank Ann and staff for the dedicated work they do in improving the lives of the many people in our community, whether it's our senior citizens from our established communities or new arrivals seeking to improve their lives.



Cesare (Chez) Dichiera





# Executive Committee 2019-2020



**Cesare (Chez) Dichiera**  
Chairperson



**Dimitri Dollard**  
Deputy Chair



**Andrew Tennant**  
Treasurer



**Paul Miller**  
Assistant Treasurer



**Alma Lapina**  
Secretary  
(resigned 2020)



**Magdalena Kazmierczak**  
Assistant Secretary



**Bobby Mehta**  
Public Relations Officer



**Lokan Ravi**  
Interfaith Officer



**Joy Sawiche Juma**  
Women's Officer



**Lunorphare Folly**  
Youth Officer  
(resigned 2020)



**Navin Thomas**  
Community Representative



**Constantine Osuchukwu**  
Immediate Past Chair

## A Tribute



**Khushi Maharaj**  
Community Representative

*na jaayate' mriyate' vaa kadaachin naayam bhuthva bhavithaa na bhooyah:  
ajo nithyah saasvato'yam puraano na hanyate' hanyamaane' sareere'*  
- from *The Bhagvad Gita*

Meaning: The Spirit is neither born nor does it die at any time. It does not come into being or cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Spirit is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.

Our dear Board member Khushi Maharaj left for his heavenly abode on 26 May 2020. His philanthropy, kindness and generosity touched many lives in Ballarat and beyond. A true karmayogi, 'Khushi uncle' was a beacon of light to many new migrant families in Ballarat. He was the founding President of the Ballarat Indian Association and served the community in the role for several years. He was also one of the founding members of Ballarat Hindu Temple and Cultural Centre and believed that kindness was his prime dharma. He is dearly remembered and missed by all.

# Executive Officer's Report

We commenced this year reviewing BRMC strategic roadmap 2017-2020. Our governance planning emphasized constitutional review, financial sustainability and measurable work planning. Operationally, we prioritized the move to and renovation of Ballarat Welcome Centre; building regional migration strategies; and developing capacity across social support services, especially for vulnerable and new and emerging communities.

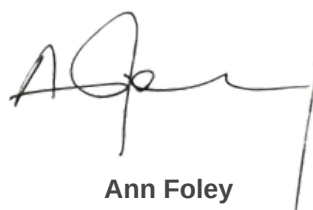
Buoyed by the success of Interkultura and new collaborations, the first half of the year tracked to plan. Young and old came together for the popular Begonia Parade and the shock of bushfires brought out the best in community including generous multicultural community support led by the Ballarat Hindu Temple Cultural Centre (BHTCC) Bushfire fundraiser.

But it was a year of extraordinary and unexpected challenges and hardship so we pivoted sharply in February 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including multilingual communication, emergency food relief and material aid. BRMC relocated into the Heritage building that is now the Ballarat Welcome Centre and at the same time put in place working-from-home, online services, contactless material aid and COVID-19 safe practices.

A huge thank you to each one of our talented, compassionate and professional team at BRMC who rallied to learn, listen and respond to community needs and support each other. The Social Support team delivered hundreds of meals and kits to isolated seniors and every staff member supported them. Our Stepping Stones business incubation moved online, pioneering online markets and virtual mentoring. Diversity Homework Club and tutor programs thrived and reached out to people with home deliveries plus extra digital devices and training. Project management, services and forums switched online and our strategic engagement and media staff didn't miss a beat.

Among partners and networks generosity and agility was also evident. Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASSN) coordinated donations every week; Sikh and Malayalee and other communities coordinated many meals for frontline health workers and financially pressured families. Ballarat Indian Association reached out to international students, Both Ballarat African Association and CMY adapted impressively online for the Rebranding African Identity project and Wimmera youth projects.

I thank the Board for your precious donated time and support. Chez Dichiera as Chair has been an exemplary leader, always mindful and always inclusive. BRMC and community benefit immensely from that leadership and example. We are well positioned to plan for the next chapter.



Ann Foley



# Ballarat Welcome Centre

Ballarat Welcome Centre at the former Town Hall in East Ballarat is strongly emerging as Ballarat's multicultural and intercultural hub. The generous spaces in the BWC and grounds enable BRMC's work to catalyse opportunities and provide a safe and welcoming place of cultural exchange, especially for new and emerging migrant communities. Linked to the Barkly Square community hub, Ballarat Welcome Centre also connects to employment, training education and broad community opportunities.

By September the Ballarat Welcome Centre Community Hall was painted, repaired and offered as a venue to members and community for regular singing, drumming classes, Tai Chi, Zumba, Pilates & Yoga classes, association and community meetings, workshops and gatherings. We glimpsed the event potential at the performance by India's talented and world-renowned sitar player, Pt. Sugato Nag. The popular Twilight Market series also showcased the place and welcomed over 1,000 visitors with a diverse range of multicultural market stalls, local entertainment, food and activities.



**Left image:** (left to right) Juliana Addison MP, Deruka Dekuek, Ann Foley, Richard Wynne MP, Michaela Settle MP & Dimitri Dollard  
**Right image:** Twilight Market at the Ballarat Welcome Centre

The December Market coincided with a visit from The Hon. Richard Wynne MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs who came to see the great things happening at the Ballarat Welcome Centre. The Minister toured the building to observe the repair works funded by the Victorian Government, and opened the December Twilight Market. We also welcomed visits from Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) Chair, Vivienne Nguyen, and look forward to a full launch and opening of the facilities in 2021, including the women's business incubator, training rooms, galleries and meeting spaces.

Ballarat Welcome Centre has operated as a key service and material aid centre during the 2019/20 COVID-19 pandemic response. We acknowledge the support to date from government and strategic partners and continue to develop the Centre towards full use and accessibility.



# Migrant English Program

The Migrant English Program (MEP) supports adult learners from diverse backgrounds achieve their language learning goals through one-on-one English tutoring. The team of trained English tutors tailors teaching strategies and resources to suit the individual needs of the learners.

In March 2020 the program made a quick transition to the online format to suit the COVID-safe service delivery requirements. This included tutor-client recruitment, tutor training, Community of Practice meetings and ongoing updating of online delivery policies and protocols. New training modules were developed to help the MEP community transition seamlessly to the new online format.

Between July 2019 - June 2020, 72 students accessed free English tutoring. One orientation and several refresher training sessions were organised to help the team of 46 tutors upskill and adapt to the ever-evolving teaching-learning scenario. The Program extended its reach to mentor clients in Beaufort, Ararat and Horsham, in addition to its existing base of learners in Ballarat.

“

*For over two years, I have been a volunteer English language tutor. Little did I know when I signed up that it would be just as much of a learning experience for me as well as my students! I've been lucky to have connected with two students, working through lessons with them both either face-to-face or online. Tutoring through the recent lockdown had its challenges, but both of my students (virtually) showed up to every lesson enthusiastic and more than willing to learn and share. Growth and connection is fostered by shared experience and trust. To witness how my students have grown in confidence and to have learned from their lives and cultures has been a highlight of my time with BRMC.*

- Anna Bilbrough, Volunteer Tutor

”



Images: Face-to-face and online tutoring sessions

“

*There is a rather ordinary word that I sometimes use. I have never thought too much about it. Lately, though, this solitary word has become of major significance both locally and globally. The word? ZOOM! As a volunteer English Tutor, and during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarabjit Kaur approached me with a very strange request indeed - would I be willing to tutor online on this "thing" called ZOOM? I had no idea at all what she meant, but being passionately wedded to tutoring, and without too much hesitation I said I would give it a go. Well here I am, months later, still Zooming along after a rather shaky start!*

- Jan Angus, Volunteer Tutor

”

# Diversity Homework Club

Diversity Homework Club (DHC) is a welcoming community of students and volunteer tutors from diverse backgrounds. It is a fun-learning space where the member students learn and grow by engaging in activities designed specifically to support their academic learning at school. This reporting period evinced a dramatic growth in the number of students attending the club meetings. With the COVID-safe program delivery protocols in place, the DHC transitioned to the online format in March 2020.

The Australian Communities Foundation and the Department of Education's Victorian African Communities Action Plan supported the Club's planning and activities. Nutritious meals were provided to the students attending DHC meetings, tech-access was facilitated, extensive individual and group training sessions were conducted to ensure a seamless transition from face-to-face to online service delivery. To support the existing team of committed volunteer tutors, several high school students signed up as Peer Tutors.

The Club reached out to 22 families and 51 school students across Ballarat ranging from 2 - 16 years of age. 33 students attended the weekly Club meetings.

“

*The DHC has made me feel like a useful part of our community because I feel proud to be able to help, in my own little way, with the children's educational future, so I feel lucky to have this opportunity.*

- Heather, DHC Tutor

*I enjoy helping students with learning new things at Diversity Homework Club. I learned a lot of things in my two year journey with DHC. Training and workshops provided by BRMC were very helpful to my tutoring.* - Tahsina, DHC Tutor

*I am extremely thankful for Diversity Homework Club team for their wonderful work. I see my child growing with every session. There is always much to learn and brain storm. Thank you.* - Azra, Parent

*The girls enjoy Homework Club so much! They talk about it and love participating in the activities.* - Suganthini, Parent

*Homework Club is enjoyable, I learn haikus, make new friends, meet my tutors who are very nice. I love Homework Club!* - Martha, Student

*Haiku writing was fun, I enjoy Homework Club.* - Nyakuey, Student

”

**Images:** (Left) Online Zoom session (Right) Nutrition and learning kit home delivery





# Stepping Stones to Small Business

Stepping Stones to Small Business launched in Ballarat in September 2019 by BRMC as the first regional iteration of a decade-old program of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

Stepping Stones is designed to support women of migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeker backgrounds to achieve autonomy and financial stability by exploring their ideas and developing skills that will help them establish a small business or pursue educational and employment opportunities.

Funded by the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet - Office of Women and local delivery agencies, Stepping Stones fulfils its objectives through delivery of empowerment and small business skills training, within a supportive gender-aware environment encouraging women to build personal networks and to think big.

13 women graduated from the inaugural Ballarat Stepping Stones Program in December 2019. In the face of COVID restrictions, six of that cohort have established the foundations of a viable micro-enterprise, three have secured employment, and one enrolled in tertiary study towards a Bachelor of Arts.



**Images:** 'Shark Tank' held by Ballarat Stepping Stones entrepreneurs at Barkly Square  
Photo credit: Brotherhood of St. Laurence

“

*I was immediately interested. I instantly felt 'This is my call!'...  
Connecting with other women from diverse backgrounds made me realise  
'This is home! I was very, very comfortable and safe to be with other women who  
came from somewhere else and who had only been here for a short time.'  
It was even better to know that everyone there shared a desire to start a business  
and gain independence, and were encouraged to do so. That affirmation.*

*- Participant of Stepping Stones*

”



# Social Support

BRMC Social Support Team, resourced by the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and the Victorian Government Home and Community Care Programs for Younger People (HACC PYP) and client contributions, provide eligible individuals with a health service to relieve social isolation.

BRMC Social Support helps people to live at home safely for as long as possible by providing vibrant programs with a strong focus on healthy and active ageing. Our programs provide an opportunity for people to make friendships, improve and develop cognitive and physical skills while empowering individuals to expand their capabilities.

We currently have 140 clients from 26 different cultural backgrounds. Clients embrace each other and come to together in harmony, creating safe environments within our programs where interculturalism can be celebrated. We provide a variety of cultural cuisines and cultural events allowing our clients to experience a 'taste of home'.

“ *Socialising, being connected and able to converse with one another stimulates the brain and events are great to look forward to.*

*Great group of people at BRMC making a huge difference to our loneliness, especially during the coronavirus.*

*- Quotes from a recent client satisfaction survey*

”

BRMC Social Support takes a person-centred approach, our programs are flexible and designed to improve the quality of life for each individual. During the challenges of COVID-19 our Social Support team quickly transitioned to Home Deliveries, delivering over 2,500 meals to date! We delivered Activity Packs aimed at keeping clients busy and active, provided welfare checks, and ensured our clients remained connected and supported.

Our largest and most vibrant program is Multicultural Tucker where clients enjoy a three-course sit down cultural meal, live entertainment and much more.

Our Social Support Team of Staff and Volunteers are dedicated to providing a rich and quality service to each client. We really do care!

**Images:** Smiling BRMC senior clients, (Left) Social Hub (Centre) Home Delivery (Right) Multicultural Tucker



# Strategic Partnerships Projects

Strategic Partnership Program (SPP) is a state-wide multicultural initiative of the Victorian Government to support and collaborate strategically with the multicultural sector. In our region BRMC has partnered with City of Ballarat, Ballarat Community Health, Centre for Multicultural Youth and Wimmera Development Agency.

Projects target inclusion, information and services, community governance and leadership, family relationships, health, education, employment, social cohesion and community engagement. The Strategic Engagement Coordination (SEC) component of the SPP targets resources to settlement gaps faced by people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

SPP funded ongoing support for BRMC peak activities and settlement networks:

- Ballarat Welcome Centre facility
- English tutoring
- Wimmera settlement strategy

In 2020 SPP also funded significant specific initiatives including:

- Ballarat African Association Forums
- Regional migration and settlement advocacy
- Melkol Lokal Dance Group
- A Tuk enterprise development
- Good Governance mentoring
- Bicultural workers for community outreach

Our Strategic Engagement Coordinator (SEC) projects included:

- Cultural Competency Training
- Wimmera Westlink Project
- Interkultura
- Regional Employment Service System (RESS)
- Wimmera Professional Services Access
- Migrant English Program Extension - Online
- Twilight Market Online

Special COVID-19 Flexible Funding:

- Financial Assistance
- Food Security
  - Fresh Food Drop-Off Program
  - Thrive Garden Project
- Technology Access

**Images:** (Left) Fresh Food Drop-Off donation (Centre) Cultural Competency Session (Right) Delivery of laptops to ensure online access



# Media & Communications

Over the past year BRMC has achieved a significant increase in community engagement and awareness of BRMC and its member organisations through effective use of our website, social media, newsletters, radio and other communications.

Our social media posts have had a reach of up to 3,500 people, with reshares and engagement from community organisations, cultural associations and key stakeholders. Our monthly newsletter continues to gain interest and the number of subscribers has doubled.

We regularly promote and share links to opportunities, events, services and programs both online and through our weekly BRMC radio segment on Voice FM.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have remained a reliable source of quality information for CALD members in our community, sharing translated resources as they become available from Government organisations.

Communications have been involved in many of BRMC's projects and events, including Interkultura, Twilight Markets and the Fresh Food Drop-Off Program. By assisting in design, digital media and online awareness, each project has had opportunity for greater exposure in the Ballarat region and Victoria.

## Social & Digital Engagement

### Facebook



**404**

New Likes

**1,277**

Total Likes

**46%**

Increase

### Twitter



**78**

New Followers

**330**

Total Followers

**30%**

Increase

### Newsletter



**97**

New Subscribers

**286**

Total Subscribers

**51%**

Increase

### Radio



**32**

Interviews

**13**

Guests





# Regions Connect

## Migration and Settlement - Regional Multicultural Services (RMS) Consortium

BRMC joined forces in 2019 with three other regional Ethnic Communities' Councils creating a regional multicultural services consortium (RMS) to coordinate regional service systems. The cross-regional partnership between Geelong Ethnic Communities Council (Diversitat) as the lead, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) and Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) commits us to work together to promote increased and sustainable regional migrant settlement support for humanitarian migrants. While each region has different economies and primary and secondary migration patterns all promote regional and cross-regional opportunities and access for new migrants and emerging communities.

Our consortium targets case support annually to 896 vulnerable migrants in their first five years through the Federal Government funded SETS program. Supported by the Victorian Government, RMS has also initiated the RESS (Regional Employment Support Service) to develop online links to employment, housing and social support options and pathways within and across regional Victoria. Resources include a web-based application for job seekers and employers. We are trialling this in Ballarat through the Intercultural Employment Program of the City of Ballarat.

## Interkultura: Connecting Through the World Game

In October 2019, the inaugural Interkultura event was staged here in Ballarat, as a 'whole of community' event, to welcome, connect and celebrate refugee communities and youth through the shared love of the world game.

The Triple D Dinner that opened the weekend was a sell-out event for 350 guests, a night of dining, discourse and dancing provided by local businesses and artists. Former Matilda, Tal Karp was MC and Interkultura Patron, Craig Foster, led a panel of young players in a dialogue on 'what football means in my life'. Players from the twelve competing regions joined business and community identities, all of whom we thank wholeheartedly for being partners and sponsors of this first Interkultura event.

The football tournament the following day brought together 150 young players and their families from emerging ethnic communities across regional Victoria. Many, such as the Nhill and Mildura teams, enjoyed the unusual chance to play at the premier Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility. All celebrated their talents and teamwork with others from diverse places and cultural backgrounds. We congratulate all participants and especially the winning Hadrami team. We also thank local representatives, Lunorpha Folly and Chudier Tyson, who presented on Interkultura to the FECCA Conference 2019.

Interkultura reinforces the richness of intercultural and regional collaboration for people considering and exploring opportunities in regional Victoria. Although we couldn't host this event in 2020 due to COVID, we are keeping in touch and know our regional partners are eager for it to become an annual event.

**Images:** (Left) Football Victoria representatives with Tal Karp, Hakeem, and Craig Foster at Triple D in October 2019 (Centre) Community conversation panel (Right) Interkultura tournament champions, Hadrami Australian Community  
Photo credit: Bespoke Design Co









# Key Program Outcomes

Our year in review 2019-2020

## Social Support



Senior clients



Countries of origin



Events



Attendees



Hours with  
4 home visit clients



Volunteers



Meals  
home delivered



Activity packs  
home delivered

## COVID-19 Support



Individuals/families  
received SEC  
financial assistance



Households  
supported through  
SEC food security



Donations of IT equipment, data,  
food & household support through  
BRASSN & partners

## Diversity Homework Club



Students



Volunteer tutors



Age range



Increase in student  
attendance

## Stepping Stones



Participants



Age range



Hours of  
training sessions



Countries of origin



Hours of  
informal coaching



Women employed as  
childminders during the  
program

## Migrant English Program



Countries of origin



Participants



Volunteer tutors



Hours of  
training sessions





# Financial Overview

## Revenue Sources

Government & Community Grants  
\$1,242,995.00 (93.5%)

Fundraising & Events \$22,690 (1.7%)

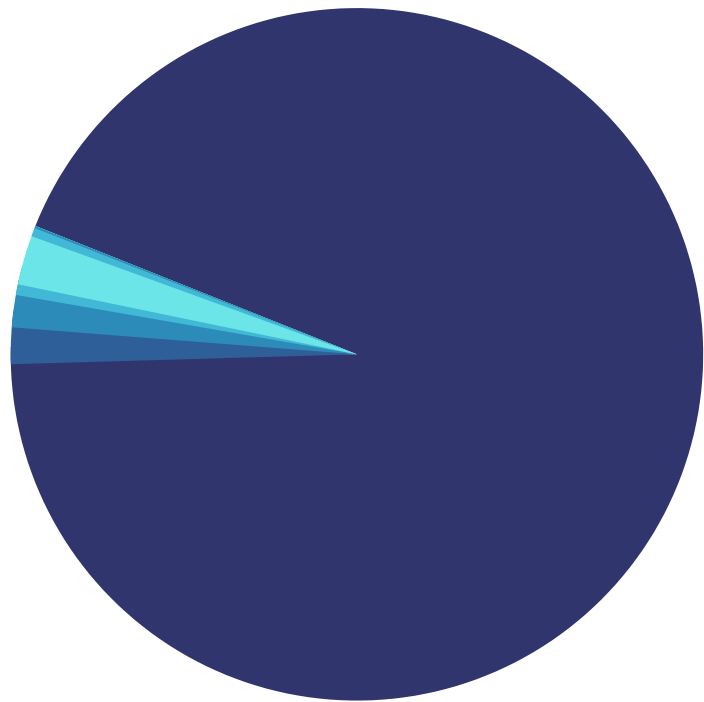
Other Revenue \$19,635 (1.5%)

Rental Income \$1,853 (0.1%)

Interest Income \$6,387 (0.5%)

Sponsorship \$30,364 (2.3%)

Donations \$5,932 (0.4%)



## Annual Expenditure Impact

Strategic Partnerships \$406,504.71 (35%)

Social Support \$353,432.59 (31%)

Diversity Homework Club \$15,098.00 (1%)

Regional Migration and Settlement Services  
\$105,772.00 (9%)

BRASSN \$1,511.00 (0.1%)

Stepping Stones \$90,039.00 (8%)

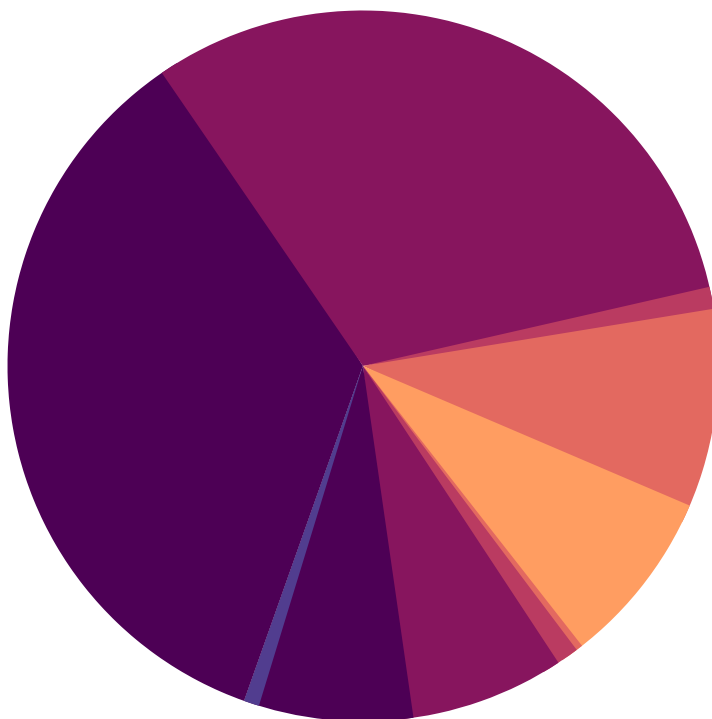
Auspiced Activities \$4,000.00 (0.3%)

Good Governance \$13,500.00 (1%)

Interkultura \$77,267.00 (7%)

Welcome Centre Infrastructure \$76,512.00 (7%)

Depreciation \$7,405.00 (0.6%)



# Partnerships & Acknowledgements

BRMC acknowledges organisations and partnerships that directly support our work.

- Australian Multicultural Foundation
- Ballarat Community Health
- BGT
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Centre for Participation
- City of Ballarat
- Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE)
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Home Affairs
- Diversitat
- Djerriwarrh
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Here Studio Architects
- Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
- Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
- Victorian Government
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Wimmera Development Association
- Women's Health Grampians

BRMC actively participates in:

- Advocacy and Action Group of Ballarat Regional Settlement Advocacy Committee (BRSAC)
- Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Action Plan Network
- Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASSN)
- Bridges to Regional Employment Settlement Subcommittee
- Central Highlands Primary Care Partnerships
- City of Ballarat Intercultural Advisory Committee
- City of Ballarat Harmony Fest Working Group
- City of Ballarat Intercultural Employment Program (IEP)
- Community of Practice for Anti-Racism Action Plan Victoria
- CoRE - Equality for All Reference Group convened by Women's Health Grampians
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) Regional Network
- Family Violence Prevention: Safer Pathways Reference Group convened jointly by Ballarat Community Health, WRISC and Women's Health Grampians
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) Regional Advisory Group
- Grampians PCP Harmony Project
- Grampians Regional Alliance
- Harmony Alliance
- Interkultura - Friendship through Football Working Group
- Regional Multicultural Services Consortium
- Regional Partnerships - Victorian Government
- Stepping Stones Regional Reference Group
- Stepping Stones to Business Reference Group
- Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) Regional Advisory Council
- Wimmera Settlement Committee

**Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council Inc.**

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