



Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council

BRMC Submission to the City of Ballarat Intercultural Plan 2022-2026

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Introduction

Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council Inc. (BRMC) is the peak multicultural agency in the Central Highlands Grampians Region (CHGR). Membership includes 29 cultural and faith associations, 11 community, government, NGO and business sector leaders, and 48 individuals. BRMC's mission is to work in partnership with our members, key government and community stakeholders, and the wider Ballarat community to actively promote multiculturalism, cultural diversity, inclusion and the wellbeing of all migrant communities throughout the CHGR.

In this capacity, BRMC often works in partnership and coordination with the City of Ballarat on various initiatives. Examples include BRMC's membership on the City of Ballarat's Intercultural Advisory Committee, partnerships between BRMC and the City of Ballarat on the Ballarat Regional Settlement Advocacy Committee (BRSAC) and EVOLVE Partnership, collaborations on COVID responsive service delivery, partnering on employment and education initiatives, and the shared promotion of diversity through events and festivals such as Harmony Festival.

In the spirit of collaboration towards our shared interests in promoting, supporting and improving multiculturalism, interculturalism, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing in Ballarat, BRMC welcomes the opportunity to prepare a submission for the City of Ballarat's Intercultural Plan 2022-2026 (hereafter referred to as the Plan).

BRMC represents the following individuals and groups, and our submission is informed by their input and interests:

- 40 general/associate members, including local cultural and faith associations, community and government partners, NGOs and businesses
- 48 individual members
- Culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse clients accessing BRMC services including Settlement Engagement Transition Support (SETS), who come from a range of backgrounds including migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- BRMC stakeholders, including members of joint committees such as the Ballarat Regional Settlement Advocacy Committee and EVOLVE Partnership, Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network, Pandemic Response and Emergency Preparedness Group, Refugee Action Collective, Ethnic Communities Councils Regional Network, Employment Action Group, Global Café Conversation Series, and COVID-19 Partnerships including with Ballarat Community Health, Grampians Health and Grampians Women's Health
- Government stakeholders such as state and federal partners.

This submission and its recommendations have also been officially endorsed by Ballarat Community Health as a key partner of BRMC and major settlement provider in Ballarat.

Enhancing Existing Policy Commitments

BRMC sees a clear role for the City of Ballarat in advocating for and supporting diversity in Ballarat. The City of Ballarat has laid strong groundwork for this role through its existing policy commitments and responsibilities.

While there is reference made to these existing commitments, there is an opportunity for the Plan to be more robustly underpinned by these commitments through:

- more explicit recognition and detailing of what these commitments entail
- translation of these commitments into concrete actions.

1. Intercultural City

As acknowledged throughout the Plan, it is directly informed by Ballarat's status as an Intercultural City. The main references made throughout the Plan are found in:

- *Defining an Intercultural City, p5*
- *Our vision, p3*
- *What is our approach, p20*
- *Inclusion principles, p25*
- *Priorities identified by our community, p32*
- *The 2-year action plan including the Intercultural Ambassadors Program, Intercultural Advisory Committee, and Intercultural Cities Network*
- *Collaboration and partnerships, p43.*

Each of these references embodies the philosophy behind the Intercultural City, by emphasising the “diversity advantage” to Ballarat and the importance of an inclusive and cohesive environment where people interact and connect.

Given that interculturalism is foundational to the Plan, more context is needed in terms of the concept and origin of the Intercultural City, as well as how this is assessed/benchmarked, particularly in relation to community participation and agency. The intercultural commitment would be strengthened by an additional paragraph that includes:

- a. A brief history of Ballarat as an Intercultural City, including how long it has been a member of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Network, what this entails and what process it went through to become a member
- b. Information around how interculturalism differs from multiculturalism and anti-discrimination, as in the Intercultural Integration Strategies 2021 Paper:

52. These elements take intercultural integration beyond the classical approach of antidiscrimination: the approach outlined in this paper requires active intervention by public authorities to de-marginalise communities (or prevent marginalisation), seeking to ensure a cultural mix in all areas and at all levels in public institutions and to develop a culture of diversity and openness to change, not only to ensure equal opportunities but as a source of dynamism, innovation, adaptability and competitive advantage. Intercultural integration deals with diversity in the spirit of win-win, as a potential to be realised, not as a problem to be minimised. It aims at building more cohesive and inclusive societies by promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence, thus also helping to prevent the spread of all forms of extremist ideologies and radicalisation that can lead to violence.

- c. Information about the Intercultural Cities Index as a benchmarking tool and how levels of intercultural success are assessed (as a note, given that the last Index benchmarking occurred in 2016, a refresh would be timely).

Additionally, we recommend the development of dedicated, visible initiatives that showcase and celebrate Ballarat as an Intercultural City.

Intercultural Food Market

- While there is already mention in the 2-year action plan of developing spaces for intercultural exchange such as an Intercultural Garden, we suggest the development of an Intercultural Food Market as an additional initiative.
- Food is a vital part of health and wellbeing, and culturally important to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- Many of our CALD members, clients and communities have struggled with food insecurity and food affordability especially during the pandemic.
- Many travel to Melbourne in order to access fresh, affordable market produce as well as specialty cultural food products.
- While Ballarat already has the Farmers Market, this tends to focus on organic and boutique growers and businesses, and is therefore not affordable to many.
- There is an opportunity to work with regional producers and local CALD businesses to develop a regular Intercultural Food Market that would showcase affordable regional produce and cultural specialty items.

Recommendation 1

Promote understanding of interculturalism by outlining the history and context of Intercultural Cities membership, benchmarking, and strategies, as well as committing to visible initiatives that showcase and celebrate the Intercultural City.

2. Welcoming City

A key priority area for BRMC is strengthening the focus in the Plan on Welcoming Cities and welcoming activities. There are several references in the Plan to the importance of being welcoming and making people feel welcome, as key to promoting diversity, acceptance, inclusion and cohesion. Direct references to Ballarat as a Welcoming City are found at:

- *What is our approach, p20*
- *2-year action plan: “Sustain Council’s membership to the Intercultural Cities Programme – Council of Europe (ICC) and Welcoming Cities Network”*
- *Collaboration and partnerships, p43.*

Similar to the point regarding the Intercultural Cities Network, more context is needed about the history, origin and commitments that are entailed in being part of the Welcoming Cities Network. Such information could include:

- a. That Welcoming Cities is a relatively new network of 250 cities globally and was formed in Australia with 65 Australian members, thus providing an excellent resource for local and national benchmarking and advocacy
- b. This is in contrast to Intercultural Cities as an international network formed in Europe, which affords networking/benchmarking on a global scale
- c. Information on and recognition of the Welcoming Cities Standards for benchmarking and accreditation, under six categories: Leadership, Learning and Skills Development, Social and Cultural Inclusion, Civic Participation, Economic Development, Places and Spaces.

Additionally, we suggest more actions that directly relate to Welcoming Cities could be included in the 2-year action plan (see our later recommendations for additional actions), such as making a commitment to progressing further with accreditation levels (Committed, Established, Advanced, Excelling, Mentoring), ensuring Council staff and local settlement provider attendance at the annual Welcoming Cities Symposium, and providing opportunities for CALD community leader participation in the network.

Priority Recommendation 1

Provide more information about and display active membership in the Welcoming Cities Network, incorporate the Welcoming Cities Standards, and commit to additional actions that strengthen local welcoming activities.

Offer 1

BRMC to be actively involved in coordinating welcome activities (detailed in response to 2-year action plan).

3. Refugee Welcome Zone

There is one reference to Refugee Welcome Zones in the 2-year action plan: “Strengthen advocacy support relating to Council’s commitment as a Refugee Welcome Zone”.

There is an opportunity to recognise Ballarat’s status as a Refugee Welcome Zone throughout the Plan. For example, this could be included under “Collaboration and partnerships” (p43) alongside information about Intercultural and Welcoming Cities.

There is also an opportunity to give further detail about when Ballarat attained this status (2013) and what this commitment entails as detailed by the Refugee Council of Australia (i.e. welcoming refugees into the community, upholding their human rights, demonstrating compassion for refugees, and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community).

We suggest that the City of Ballarat could also consider further measures to be an active Refugee Welcome Zone, especially given the positive attitude of the new federal government towards migration. BRMC would be available to assist in an advisory capacity. Such measures could include:

- a. Advocating for and supporting the development of a **community refugee sponsorship model** in Ballarat with specific targets
- b. Continuing to advocate to the federal government for the **awarding of work and study rights to temporary visa holders** (recently demonstrated by the Mayor's June 2022 letter to the federal government on behalf of temporary visa holders)
- c. Exploring potential for a **Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA)** with the federal government to attract and sponsor semi/skilled overseas workers
- d. Working in partnership with local educational bodies/universities to **advocate for reduced fees/scholarships** (many migrants pay international fees)
- e. **Recognising the positive contributions of refugees and asylum seekers** to Ballarat's economy and society
- f. **Acknowledging the efforts of loyal community supporters and organisations** who volunteer to support local refugees and asylum seekers
- g. Expressing interest in joining the **Refugee Welcome Zone Leadership Group** that was recently established by the Refugee Council of Australia to further develop the direction of the initiative
- h. Applying to become an **Executive Member of the Back Your Neighbour campaign**, run by the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum. The City of Ballarat is currently a General Member, but Executive Membership would afford a place on the Steering Group and add a regional voice to the campaign, as the current Executive Membership of the Steering Group is made up of 10 metropolitan Melbourne councils.

Recommendation 2

Recognise and take more active measures in relation to the City of Ballarat's commitments as a Refugee Welcome Zone.

Offer 2

BRMC to act in an advisory and supportive capacity to strengthen the City of Ballarat's commitments as a Refugee Welcome Zone.

4. National Settlement Framework

Local government has a key role to play in Australian settlement. Especially with a new federal government amenable to increasing migration, there is an opportunity for the City of Ballarat to take a proactive approach in the settlement and migration space.

The Plan states that it aligns with the National Settlement Framework (NSF) and Standards in the Acknowledgements (p46). Under the NSF, the responsibilities of local government are to:

- *Provide information to the other tiers of government regarding the needs and issues for particular community groups*
- *Provide a range of services and infrastructure to the local community, including, where relevant and depending on financial capacity, specialised services to migrants and new arrivals and initiatives to encourage settlement in a particular locality.*

In relation to the nine priority areas of the NSF (on which the Standards are modelled), services suggested under the local government tier are:

1. *Education and Training*
 - *Lifelong learning and partnering and supporting local community*
 - *Local libraries as knowledge and learning hubs*
2. *Employment*
 - *Local economic development initiatives*
 - *Community based volunteer programmes*
3. *Health and Wellbeing*
 - *Preventative health programmes, community gardens, walking groups, community recreational activities*
4. *Housing*
 - *Local community housing and affordable housing programmes*
5. *Language Services*
 - *Community language service programmes*
 - *Resident information kits in multiple languages*
6. *Transport*
 - *Community transport services*
7. *Civic Participation*
 - *Welcome to the Community Kits, community festivals, events, ceremonies, Australia Citizenship ceremonies*
8. *Family and Social Support*
 - *Community centres, recreational activities, aged and childcare services*
9. *Justice*
 - *Information on for example, dispute resolution, fines and local by-laws.*

We suggest that the City of Ballarat review the Plan and existing actions in light of these local government service commitments in the NSF, in order to identify any gaps or areas in which existing actions could more closely align with the Framework.

Two significant gaps that have emerged out of our recent settlement mapping research for the Destination Ballarat project are transport and housing.

Transport

- Many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) residents are in need of more affordable driver education and training programs. Current L2P Learner Driver Mentor Programs provided through the Ballarat Foundation are overwhelmed by demand. There is a role here for the City of Ballarat in providing support to providers to deliver affordable driver training programs.
- Moreover, public transport improvements and concessions, such as Myki discounts provided in Melbourne by the Victorian Government and Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to asylum-seeking clients, are needed for those who do not have access to a car. Provision of shared vehicle fleets to service providers to assist clients is another area of need.

Housing

- There is an urgent need to address housing shortages and provide affordable short- and long-term housing options. This is especially important to realise Ballarat's strategic priority to increase its skilled migration intake.
- For example, the company Host International matches onshore skilled professional migrant jobseekers with regional employment opportunities and

has indicated that there are 20-50 workers who could be placed in Ballarat to fill labour shortages. For this vision to become a reality would require innovative solutions, looking to other best practice models of housing responsiveness.

- International best practice models include examples from the *Housing for Migrants and Refugees in the UNECE Region: Challenges and Practices 2021 Report*, and Germany's partnership with Airbnb and non-profits to provide 300,000 Ukrainian refugees with private housing. Local examples include the Wimmera Housing Blueprint, Ararat Workforce Pilot New Settlement Program, and Opportunities Pyrenees, Ararat and Northern Grampians (OPAN) project.
- Additionally, new arrivals often face barriers from real estate agents in securing rental properties as they cannot provide local references. There needs to be cultural competence training and awareness building to remove these barriers.

We are supportive of the approach of the City of Ballarat's draft Housing Strategy to be informed by the Intercultural Plan, to consider the needs of migrant and refugee communities, and to continuously involve these communities in implementation, monitoring and evaluation through co-design.

Another recommended avenue to pursue coordinated approaches to supporting priority areas such as transport and housing is the Ballarat Regional Settlement Advocacy Committee (BRSAC).

Recommendation 3

Review existing actions in the 2-year action plan against the National Settlement Framework and Destination Ballarat mapping research, and work to innovatively address known gaps such as transport/housing through coordinated advocacy work with BRSAC.

5. Commonwealth Legislation

Under wider policy context on p43 of the Plan, the relevant federal policies listed are:

- The People of Australia – Australia's Multicultural Policy 2011
- National Anti-Racism Strategy 2012.

Anti-racism commitments need to be strengthened and more clearly communicated in the Plan. We provide recommendations later in relation to the 2-year action plan.

Commonwealth legislation relating to human rights and racial discrimination is also relevant to the Plan and should be added to this section.

Recommendation 4

Add the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 and Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to the list of Commonwealth policies to which the Plan is responsive (p43 of the Plan).

Diversity within Diversity: CALD Challenges and Opportunities

1. CALD Understanding and Definition

The Plan lays out a solid case for why it is important to provide advocacy, support and inclusion to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the section “Why is this important?”, p14-19.

In this section, the Plan outlines the key factors that determine cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in Ballarat by providing a current demographic overview under “Ballarat is a changing and diverse community”, with data taken from the 2021 Census and Department of Home Affairs Settlement Reports.

The Plan then details the key issues faced by CALD communities. Sections of CALD communities are mentioned as experiencing greater health and social challenges: “People who were born in another country, speak a language other than English or practise a faith different to the majority of the community”. Specific issues mentioned are:

- *Discrimination and intolerance can create a barrier to participation in the community and employment and accessing health and social services*
- *Many CALD residents struggle to find meaningful employment because previous qualifications, education or training are not always recognised*
- *Those who speak no English or English as an additional language face challenges when accessing services, employment and social opportunities.*

The overview of diversity demographics is as comprehensive as possible given the data available, and the issues acknowledged for CALD communities are important.

However, at the moment the presentation of CALD communities and the issues they face is general, glossing over significant differences and diversity that exists under the banner of CALD communities.

Especially given the focus of the Inclusion Framework on intersectionality, we suggest that the Plan put forward a more complex, comprehensive understanding of CALD communities based on current settlement policy research (e.g. government reports such as the Shergold Review 2019, research by the Settlement Council of Australia, Migration Council of Australia, Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, Diversity Council Australia, Scanlon Foundation, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Settlement Services International, Grattan Institute, Regional Australia Institute).

This more complex definition and understanding would acknowledge:

a. Diversity exists within CALD communities. Some examples of this diversity include:

- Established CALD communities and emerging CALD communities
- Permanent visa holders and temporary visa holders
- Ageing CALD residents and young CALD residents
- Intergenerational differences between parents and children
- CALD men and women
- CALD residents with intersecting identities/factors, e.g. have a disability, identify as LGBTIQ+.

- b. ***Different groups within CALD communities face specific issues and opportunities.*** Highlighting some of these issues using the examples above:
- Emerging CALD communities may need more initial integration support than established communities, especially language support
 - Temporary visa holders may experience restricted work and study rights and lack of access to services, that act as barriers to participation in society
 - Ageing CALD residents experience increased isolation, while young CALD residents experience greater levels of mental health issues
 - CALD women experience barriers to education and employment, while CALD men experience isolation
 - CALD residents with a disability or who are LGBTIQ+ face multiple forms of discrimination at once.

However, there are also opportunities for each group, such as:

- Established CALD communities support emerging communities
- Temporary visa holders are looking for productive ways to contribute such as volunteering
- Ageing CALD residents can act as mentors
- Young CALD residents can participate in arts, sports and social programs
- CALD residents with intersecting identities can access multiple channels of support.

- c. ***Distinction between CALD communities and Aboriginal communities.*** While interculturalism takes a whole-of-society approach to diversity, it is important that the distinct identities, histories, issues, and opportunities of different groups are acknowledged. The importance of Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and the fact that they are culturally very different to CALD communities is important to emphasise, to avoid grouping all non-white cultures together. Specific actions are needed to make this distinction and to foster understanding of Indigenous cultures for new migrants. Such actions could include:

- More cross-referencing and cohesion between the Intercultural Plan and the City of Ballarat's Reconciliation Action Plan
- Fostering partnership and collaboration opportunities between the Koorie Action Engagement Group and the Intercultural Advisory Committee
- Building Aboriginal welcome and information into migrant welcome activities.

- d. ***Regional settings.*** It is also important that the Plan acknowledges the differences between experiences of CALD communities in regional versus urban areas, including in local attitudes. For example, the Settlement Council of Australia's recent submission to the Federal Government's "Next Steps to Improve Australia's Settlement and Integration of Refugees" recommended (Recommendation 22) that a different funding model be adopted for regional settlement providers including:

- Greater community capacity building than contracts in other areas
- Extra work to attract people to regional areas

- Recognition that individual client services will require a greater level of intensity, and administrative costs may need to be higher in regional areas.

Recommendation 5

Develop a more complex and comprehensive definition and understanding of CALD communities based on current research that recognises:

- ***Diversity within CALD communities, posing different challenges/opportunities***
- ***Distinctions, and the need for understanding, between CALD communities and Aboriginal peoples, embedded in specific actions such as cross-referencing between the Intercultural Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan, collaboration between the Koorie Action Engagement Group and Intercultural Advisory Committee, and building Aboriginal information into migrant welcome activities.***
- ***Challenges and opportunities posed for CALD communities in a regional setting.***

2. Local Data Collection and Research

Current demographic data used to determine cultural and linguistic diversity in Ballarat is reliant on national-level data such as the Census and the Department of Home Affairs Settlement Reports. While this data is incredibly useful, it is also incomplete as it does not provide detail on migrants living in the Ballarat community who fall outside the categories of citizens or skilled/family/humanitarian visa holders: i.e. people seeking asylum and those on other forms of temporary visas.

Additionally, national level data is collected infrequently, meaning that it does not allow for responsive and up-to-date figures on changing migration patterns.

We suggest that regular and consistent local data collection efforts would provide a more accurate picture of migration in Ballarat through providing up-to-date data and a source of comparison with national data. We suggest a collaborative approach to collecting this data that includes the City of Ballarat, BRMC and other settlement providers, and the responsible sharing of data between partners in order to improve service and policy quality and coordination.

Recommendation 6

Lead in the collection of local data and research on cultural and linguistic diversity in Ballarat, including data on citizens, skilled/family/humanitarian visa holders, and temporary visa holders such as people seeking asylum.

Offer 3

BRMC to provide regular input into local data collection efforts, and advice/input on current best practice in relation to research and successful settlement models.

Additional Actions for 2-Year Action Plan

The 2-year action plan lays out concrete actions the City of Ballarat will take over the next two years in support of the Plan. In this section, we propose additional actions to complement the existing actions in the four priority areas identified.

1. Responsive Services

Bicultural Workers

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased usage of bicultural workers to promote public health messaging. We have found bicultural workers to be a hugely valuable addition to service delivery and effective messaging. Bicultural workers give a more direct voice to clients and promote cultural safety. As a new and innovative initiative, we need more investment, professional development and support opportunities to enhance bicultural worker uptake and upskilling. We recommend that the use and support of bicultural workers be considered by the City of Ballarat as an effective communication tool in addition to providing information in different languages.

Additional Action: Engage bicultural workers to promote effective cultural messaging and service delivery.

Intercultural Welcome Hub/s

Emerging CALD communities, such as our Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) clients, value services where they know and can trust the staff. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many CALD residents were more comfortable attending Vaccination Hubs at BRMC's Welcome Centre than at mainstream health services. We would like to build on this service capacity of the Welcome Centre, but an issue with expanding services is that features of the infrastructure provide barriers for particular groups with accessibility needs such as older and disabled clients.

Additionally, our membership of established cultural associations actively host many cultural and religious events and celebrations throughout the year. An issue that they have expressed is finding an appropriate, affordable venue for hosting events that has space to accommodate their large communities and that has a commercial kitchen.

Given that both emerging and established CALD communities require an accessible and welcoming space, there is a need for one-stop hub/s in Ballarat that can be used for both service provision and forming/maintaining social and cultural connections.

Additional Action: Coordinate with BRMC and other settlement agencies to develop and support accessible and well-equipped Intercultural Hub/s for service provision and connection. Specifically, provide targeted support to the continued development of Ballarat Welcome Centre as an intercultural hub.

Offer 4

BRMC in collaboration with City of Ballarat to promote recognition of Ballarat Welcome Centre as a central welcome place and hub.

Welcome Activities

As noted in the Plan, there is a need for more support to newly arrived people in terms of orientation and information. During our research for the upcoming *Destination Ballarat Report 2022*, we received feedback that many established migrants were finding out about services available to them years after settling in Ballarat. A common refrain was “I wish I had known about this when I arrived”. This further underlines the importance of coordinated work to orient and support newcomers.

Furthermore, welcoming could include information and support about education and employment pathways and civic participation rights and obligations. This would empower newly arrived people to participate as fully as possible in Australian society.

We support the “Welcome Packs” proposed as an existing action, and suggest they cover the following information:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history
- Australian society and culture, including Ballarat’s history, society and culture
- Information on key settlement topics (following the NSF): education options, employment support including Australian workplace culture and rights, language services and English classes, social and family support, legal services, financial services, volunteer opportunities and civic participation, housing options, transport options
- Essential services information: hospitals, schools, emergency services.

We also suggest that the City of Ballarat could provide additional welcome activities in partnership with BRMC and other settlement agencies. Such activities could include:

- Regular orientation and information sessions, e.g. at Ballarat Library
- Welcoming events and social opportunities for newcomers to meet locals and form connections
- Council staff attending BRMC’s Welcome Morning Tea to provide information
- Council, in partnership with BRMC and other settlement agencies, providing welcome tours of services, such as Ballarat Lifestyle and Aquatic Centre, Ballarat Libraries, Parent Place, Ballarat Community Health services etc.

Priority Action: Provide welcome activities for newcomers in partnership with BRMC and other settlement agencies.

Online Calendar

BRMC CALD members have given feedback that while there are many activities throughout the year they would like to attend and participate in, there is no central information point where they can access up-to-date information about events. In addition to the “All of Us” Calendar, we suggest that the City of Ballarat, in partnership with BRMC, create an online calendar that is updated regularly with key events.

Offer 5

BRMC to partner with City of Ballarat in the creation of an online calendar of CALD events that is updated regularly.

2. Active Citizenship

Settlement Advocacy

As previously mentioned in the submission under “Existing Policy Commitments”, this is an opportune time for the City of Ballarat to increase its settlement advocacy given the favourable national settlement landscape. Some additional actions the Plan could consider are:

- Advocating to the federal government for new settlement models such as community refugee sponsorship models
- Increasing commitments and participation as a Refugee Welcome Zone
- Advocating in areas where there are known gaps, for example as identified in the *Destination Ballarat* mapping, the need for more housing opportunities for newcomers, and driving programs for CALD communities
- Assessing opportunities to align with the National Settlement Framework.

Additional Action: Increase settlement advocacy efforts to all levels of government in line with commitments as a Refugee Welcome Zone and as part of the National Settlement Framework.

Commitment to Welcoming Cities

As previously mentioned in the submission under “Existing Policy Commitments”, we suggest that the City of Ballarat extend its commitment to the Welcoming Cities Network through additional actions such making a commitment to progressing further with accreditation levels (Committed, Established, Advanced, Excelling, Mentoring), ensuring Council staff attendance at the annual Welcoming Cities Symposium along with key settlement providers (such as BRMC), and encouraging opportunities for CALD community capacity building through sponsoring CALD community participation in the network and at meetings through presentations.

Priority Action: Commit to supporting the Welcoming Cities Network through progressing further with accreditation levels, ensuring Council staff and settlement provider attendance at the annual Welcoming Cities Symposium, and sponsoring CALD community leader participation and presentations.

Intercultural Initiatives

As previously mentioned, we recommend the development of dedicated, visible initiatives that showcase and celebrate Ballarat as an Intercultural City. In particular, there is an opportunity to develop a regular Intercultural Food Market. Many of our culturally and linguistically diverse members, clients and communities have struggled with food insecurity and many travel to Melbourne in order to access fresh, affordable market produce as well as specialty cultural food products. There is an opportunity to work with regional producers and local CALD businesses to develop a regular Intercultural Food Market that would showcase affordable regional produce and local cultural specialty items. This would also be an excellent avenue for regional tourism.

Additional Action: In collaboration with regional producers and local CALD businesses, develop a regular Intercultural Food Market.

Attracting Labour Migration

Recent work by the Economic Development team within the City of Ballarat has focused on the potential of attracting migrants to Ballarat as a means to fill labour shortages. Host International has also expressed interest in placing migrant workers in Ballarat. This was further explored at a Migration and Employment Forum held at the Ballarat Welcome Centre with City of Ballarat, BRMC and other settlement providers, local employers, CALD jobseekers, entrepreneurs and cultural leaders on 3 September 2022. Given this work is in train, we suggest that the Plan incorporate an additional action focusing on exploring potential for strengthening coordinated employment strategies to attract migrants to the region.

Additional Action: Through BRSAC, explore potential for strengthening coordinated employment strategies across Council, business and settlement sectors to attract migrant workers to the region.

3. Leadership and Advocacy

Collaborative Opportunities for Intercultural Ambassadors

The Intercultural Ambassadors program is a strong and continuing element of promoting active citizenship amongst Ballarat's CALD communities. We suggest maximising the role and reach of the Intercultural Ambassadors through collaborative work between Council, BRMC and other settlement agencies. For example, Ambassadors could be jointly inducted by BRMC and City of Ballarat, and play a key role in activities such as:

- Acting as the face of the Ballarat Welcome Centre
- Welcoming and orienting newly arrived people
- Training welcoming citizens
- Delivering Cultural Competency Training and Anti-Racism Training
- Mentoring emerging and established CALD communities
- Promoting health and up-to-date COVID information to CALD communities
- Promoting CALD events, activities, business opportunities both to CALD communities and wider society
- Participating in and promoting the Good Governance program
- Community capacity building and taking on governance roles.

Priority Action: Explore collaborative opportunities for maximising the role and reach of Intercultural Ambassadors across communities and sectors.

Offer 6

BRMC commits to being actively involved in the induction, training and community capacity building of Intercultural Ambassadors.

Anti-Racism Reporting Tool

While the current anti-racism reporting tool on the City of Ballarat website is useful, it could be improved through more accessible and detailed background information, translated information and audio in different languages, and external promotion to community members. Some best practice examples for benchmarking are Glen Eira City Council and Cardinia Shire Council's Reporting Racism Tools.

In line with increasing commitments to anti-racism through training and a public statement, we recommend that the City of Ballarat update its Reporting Racism Tool.

Additional Action: Update and promote Reporting Racism Tool with additional information, including in different languages and audio.

CALD Volunteer Opportunities

CALD communities are under-represented in official volunteer statistics, despite undertaking substantial amounts of unpaid work for their families and communities. Additionally, many people seeking asylum on temporary visas who do not have work or study rights are actively seeking volunteer opportunities to be productive. CALD communities have many skills to offer, including bilingual language support.

A 2019 report by the Settlement Council of Australia and Volunteering Australia found:

- *65% of new arrivals to Australia volunteered within the first 18 months of their arrival*
- *New migrants and refugees are very involved in volunteering*
- *New migrants were largely motivated to contribute to society, make friends, improve their English or gain local work experience*
- *There were a number of personal and professional benefits gained from volunteering for both volunteers and organisations; and*
- *More support is needed to engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds.*

Ballarat has an active volunteer culture, especially in the settlement space, with many community members volunteering English language support, material and food aid, and social support. We suggest that volunteers' contributions be acknowledged.

Further, we suggest that the City of Ballarat capitalise on Ballarat's strong volunteer culture by promoting and supporting volunteer opportunities for CALD community members both emerging and established. This may entail working with employers to remove red tape around insurance categories that act as a barrier to volunteering.

Additional Action: Recognise the efforts of existing volunteers through awards/certificates; promote/support volunteer opportunities for CALD community members both emerging and established.

4. Maximising and Valuing Diversity

Refreshed Annual Cultural Celebration

Ballarat is known for the annual Harmony Festival, which has generated visibility of diversity and opportunities for participation from local CALD communities. However, Harmony Festival falls in the busy March festival period for Ballarat, coinciding with the signature Begonia Festival.

We recommend a refreshed and rebranded, identifiable and annually consistent celebration of cultural diversity. In terms of forward planning, we recommend that consideration be made to hold this at a different time of year than March. This refreshed festival could draw on other examples of regional best practice festival models such as Pako Festa and Zinda Festival in Geelong and Bendigo.

Priority Action: Host a refreshed annual cultural celebration at a different time of year to March, benchmarked against regional examples of best practice.

CALD Community Capacity Building

Many CALD community members, especially established ones, are already doing much important work for their communities, for example through hosting events, engaging in health promotion and awareness, and supporting vulnerable community members. We suggest that the City of Ballarat recognise their leadership capacity by involving them in the delivery of events, such as a refreshed annual cultural celebration.

Priority Action: Give CALD community members leadership roles in the delivery of events and cultural celebrations.

The City of Ballarat could also build community capacity by support CALD communities in hosting their own events, and providing CALD communities with accessible information about how to host their own flag raisings and clock tower and fountain lightings to mark cultural celebrations.

Additional Action: Support CALD communities to host events, and provide accessible information to CALD communities on how to mark cultural celebrations (e.g. flag raisings, clock tower lightings).

Community grants programs or seed funding has been shown to be highly successful in creating social and economic pathways for CALD communities by allowing ownership over a project that benefits the community. In order to further increase the capacity and empowerment of CALD communities, we suggest that the City of Ballarat offer a community grants program or stream of funding for CALD communities.

Additional Action: Establish a community grants program/stream for CALD communities.

Sports and Arts Opportunities

Increasing CALD participation in arts and sports is mentioned without a specific action. Sport is an important social connector and integrator, and has multiple health benefits. Art also has proven importance as a means of exploring and communicating identity. Both sport and arts are part of Ballarat's lifeblood, with Ballarat boasting excellent sport and arts infrastructure, and taking a key role in the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Given this existing capacity, we suggest an action around increasing CALD community participation in sport and art.

Additional Action: Increase opportunities for CALD community participation in sports and arts through coordination with relevant local partners.

Priority Recommendation 2

Add the following priority actions to the 2-year action plan:

- **Provide welcome activities for newcomers in partnership with BRMC and other settlement agencies.**
- **Commit to supporting the Welcoming Cities Network through progressing further with accreditation levels, ensuring Council staff and local settlement provider attendance at the annual Welcoming Cities Symposium, and sponsoring CALD community leader participation and presentations.**
- **Explore collaborative opportunities for maximising the role and reach of Intercultural Ambassadors across communities and sectors.**
- **Host a refreshed annual cultural celebration at a different time of year to March, benchmarked against regional examples of best practice.**
- **Give CALD community members leadership roles in the delivery of events and cultural celebrations.**

Recommendation 7

Add the following additional actions to the 2-year action plan:

- **Engage bicultural workers to promote effective cultural messaging and service delivery.**
- **Coordinate with BRMC and other settlement agencies to develop and support accessible and well-equipped Intercultural Hub/s for service provision and social connection. Provide targeted support to continued development of Ballarat Welcome Centre as an intercultural hub.**
- **Increase settlement advocacy efforts to all levels of government in line with commitments as a Refugee Welcome Zone and as part of the National Settlement Framework.**
- **In collaboration with regional producers and local CALD businesses, develop a regular Intercultural Food Market.**
- **Through BRSAC, explore potential for strengthening coordinated employment strategies across Council, business and settlement sectors to attract migrant workers to the region.**
- **Update and promote Reporting Racism Tool with additional information, including in different languages and audio.**
- **Recognise the efforts of existing volunteers through awards/certificates; promote/support volunteer opportunities for CALD community members both emerging and established.**
- **Contribute to community capacity building through supporting CALD communities to host events, providing accessible information to CALD communities on how to mark cultural celebrations (e.g. flag raisings) and establishing a CALD community grants program/stream.**
- **Increase opportunities for CALD participation in sports and arts.**

Summary of BRMC Recommendations

1. Priority Recommendations

Priority Recommendation 1

Provide more information about and display active membership in the Welcoming Cities Network, incorporate the Welcoming Cities Standards, and commit to additional actions that strengthen local welcoming activities.

Priority Recommendation 2

Add the following priority actions to the 2-year action plan:

- ***Provide welcome activities for newcomers in partnership with BRMC and other settlement agencies.***
- ***Commit to supporting the Welcoming Cities Network through progressing further with accreditation levels, ensuring Council staff and local settlement provider attendance at the annual Welcoming Cities Symposium, and sponsoring CALD community leader participation and presentations.***
- ***Explore collaborative opportunities for maximising the role and reach of Intercultural Ambassadors across communities and sectors.***
- ***Host a refreshed annual cultural celebration at a different time of year to March, benchmarked against regional examples of best practice.***
- ***Give CALD community members leadership roles in the delivery of events and cultural celebrations.***

2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Promote interculturalism by outlining Intercultural Cities membership, benchmarking, and strategies, and initiatives showcasing interculturalism.

Recommendation 2

Recognise and take more active measures in relation to the City of Ballarat's commitments as a Refugee Welcome Zone.

Recommendation 3

Review 2-year action plan against National Settlement Framework and Destination Ballarat mapping, and work to innovatively address gaps such as transport/housing through coordinated advocacy work with BRSAC.

Recommendation 4

Add Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 and Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to list of Commonwealth policies in Appendices.

Recommendation 5

Develop a more complex and comprehensive definition and understanding of CALD communities based on current research that recognises:

- *Diversity within CALD communities, with challenges/opportunities*
- *Distinctions, and need for understanding, between CALD and Aboriginal peoples, embedded in actions (Intercultural and Reconciliation Action Plans, KEAG and IAC, Aboriginal migrant welcome activities).*
- *Challenges/opportunities for CALD communities in a regional setting.*

Recommendation 6

Lead in local data and research collection on cultural diversity in Ballarat.

Recommendation 7

Add the following additional actions to the 2-year action plan:

- *Engage bicultural workers for effective messaging and service delivery.*
- *Coordinate with BRMC and settlement agencies to develop and support Intercultural Hub/s, with targeted support to the Ballarat Welcome Centre.*
- *Increase settlement advocacy efforts as a Refugee Welcome Zone and as part of the National Settlement Framework.*
- *In collaboration with regional producers and local CALD businesses, develop a regular Intercultural Food Market.*
- *Through BRSAC, explore potential for strengthening coordinated employment strategies to attract migrant workers to the region.*
- *Update and promote Reporting Racism Tool with additional information, including in different languages and audio.*
- *Recognise the efforts of existing volunteers; promote/support volunteer opportunities for CALD community members emerging and established.*
- *Contribute to community capacity building through supporting CALD communities to host events, providing information on how to mark cultural celebrations (e.g. flag raisings), and establishing a CALD community grants program/stream.*
- *Increase opportunities for CALD participation in sports and arts.*

3. Offers

Offer 1

BRMC to be actively involved in coordinating welcome activities (detailed in response to action plan).

Offer 2

BRMC to act in an advisory and supportive capacity to strengthen the City of Ballarat's commitments as a Refugee Welcome Zone.

Offer 3

BRMC to provide regular input into local data collection efforts, and advice/input on current best practice in relation to research and successful settlement models.

Offer 4

BRMC in collaboration with City of Ballarat to promote recognition of Ballarat Welcome Centre as a central welcome place and hub.

Offer 5

BRMC to partner with City of Ballarat in the creation of an online calendar of CALD events that is updated regularly.

Offer 6

BRMC commits to being actively involved in the induction, training and community capacity building of Intercultural Ambassadors.