DESTINATION BALLARAT REPORT:
Readiness for Regional Settlement

An evidence base mapping our regional settlement ecosystem in 2022 and supporting best practice into the future

Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council

December 2022

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For the EVOLVE Strategic Partnership on regional and rural migration and settlement in the Central Highlands and Grampians regions of Western Victoria
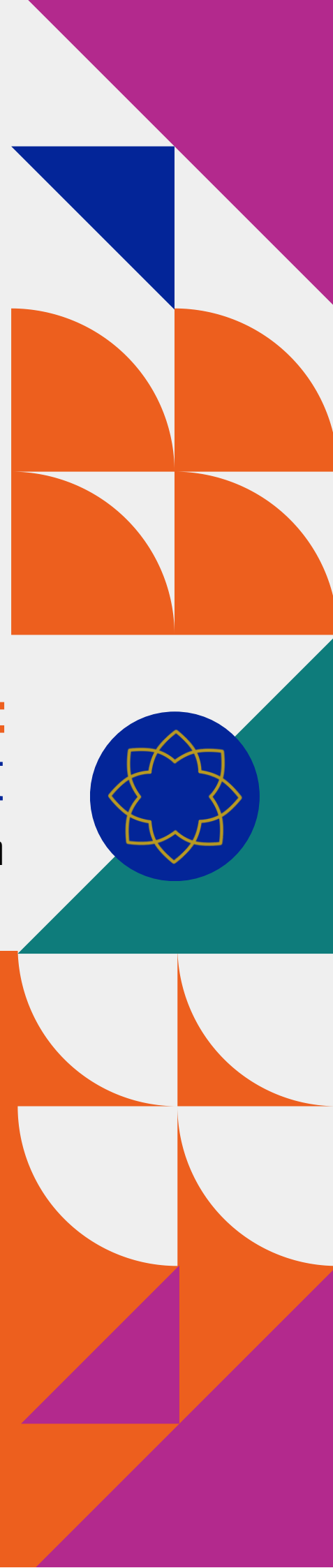
Fig 1. Anti-Racism Training

ABOUT BRMC

Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council Inc. (BRMC) is the peak multicultural agency in the Central Highlands Grampians Region (CHGR). Membership currently 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, 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 region.

BRMC celebrates multiculturalism and promotes diverse communities through advocacy and partnerships. Our services alleviate hardship and support full social and economic participation by migrants and refugees in Ballarat and Western Victoria.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTE ON TERMS

In this Report, 'people from migrant and refugee backgrounds', 'migrants', 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)' and 'new arrivals' refer to people who have come to Australia through a variety of channels, including humanitarian, family and skilled migration pathways. Following the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), we use these terms to refer to backgrounds and ancestry that are not part of the dominant Anglo-Celtic Australian population. The terms are inclusive of people seeking asylum, on temporary visas and undocumented migrants. CALD is also inclusive of people born in Australia from diverse backgrounds.

The term 'settlement' describes the process through which new arrivals choosing to make Australia their home adjust to life here. We are part of the Australian settlement sector who play a large role in facilitating successful settlement and who have committed, through the Settlement Council of Australia's (SCoA) Road to Belonging Strategy,[1] to ensure that all people of migrant and refugee backgrounds belong, thrive and experience fulfilling lives. Following SCoA's strategy, we recognise settlement as a whole-of-community process that involves all of society welcoming newcomers. Settlement is best thought of as an ecosystem involving formal and informal support through settlement providers, community groups, volunteers, cultural and faith organisations, governments and businesses, among others.

We adopt the term 'settlement city' from the Edmund Rice Centre's Settlement Cities Report[2] to signify our aspiration and commitment to become a primary regional settlement destination for humanitarian and skilled migrants. This term originally referred to the seven Local Government Areas where the majority of Australia's humanitarian intake begin the process of building a new life. While these cities are mostly urban or peri-urban, we extend the term to regional Australia to showcase destinations such as ours that are ready and willing to increase settlement intake.
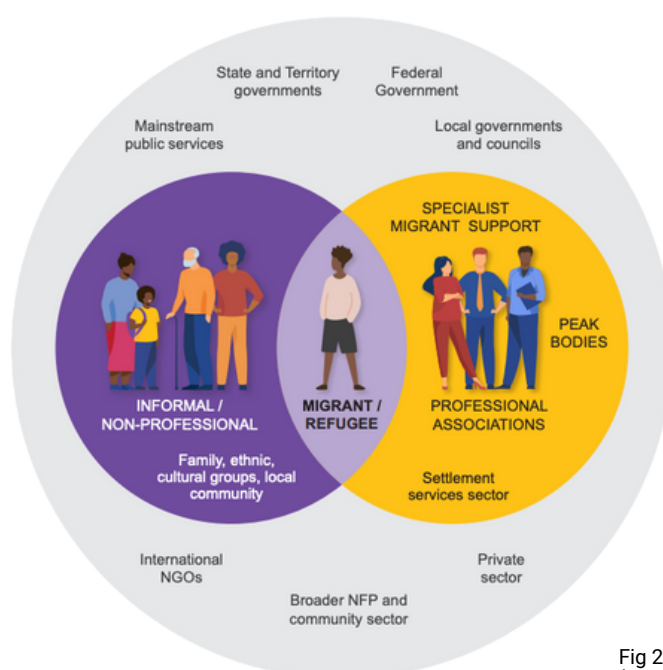

Fig 2. Settlement Council of Australia's Settlement Ecosystem, SCoA (2022), Road to Belonging Report, p. 11.

[1] Settlement Council of Australia, *Road to Belonging* (2022).
[2] Edmund Rice Centre, *Settlement Cities* (2022).

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FOREWORD by Ann Foley, CEO of BRMC

Now more than ever, migration is a policy priority for all levels of government in Australia. We are very pleased to be in a strong position as a regional settlement city launching our Destination Ballarat Report. Ballarat has made significant progress since 2000 when we welcomed our first humanitarian entrants, and even since our launch of the first report in this series in 2016. We have fostered strong local strategic partnerships across community, government, business and settlement sectors. We have developed our settlement service infrastructure to effectively support our growing CALD communities. We have seen 30 cultural and faith associations flourish, representing both established and emerging communities. We have witnessed the unwavering commitment of volunteers who welcome new arrivals, and the establishment of the City of Ballarat as an Intercultural City, a Welcoming City and a Refugee Welcome Zone.

The EVOLVE Partnership responsible for the publication of this Report is a testament to Ballarat's collective commitment to successful settlement. Together, BRMC, the City of Ballarat, Ballarat Community Health (BCH), the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) and Wimmera Development Association (WDA) seek to ensure that our regional and rural settlement support and opportunities are provided in a sustainable and inclusive manner that strengthens regional communities and economies while supporting new arrivals and enabling existing CALD communities.

As a thriving secondary settlement destination, we often fly under the radar. Our Report demonstrates that Ballarat is ready and willing to step up as a primary settlement city. We offer flexible and innovative settlement solutions through a community that understands and values investment in its diverse future.

AIM AND PURPOSE

The Destination Ballarat Report: Readiness for Regional Settlement is the second in our BRMC research series mapping the region's settlement capacity. The series is based on the premise that regional settlement is socially and economically beneficial, and optimised by benchmarking against best practice.

Our Report aims to highlight the readiness of Ballarat to support and increase regional settlement. It assesses settlement capacity, coordination and leadership through innovative new research. This includes our Settlement Services Mapping Framework, the first attempt to map regional settlement provisions against SCoA's National Settlement Outcomes Standards (NSOS); the Settling in Ballarat Survey, highlighting lived experiences of settlement from Ballarat's overseas born residents; and local case studies and innovations showcasing Ballarat's strategic collaborative partnerships.

This research provides a robust evidence base, illustrating that Ballarat is ideally placed around critical success factors in regional settlement,[3] and taking into account the need for a post-COVID regional settlement agenda focused on achieving sustainable settlement through partnering regional development with community empowerment and long-term settlement.[4] This places Ballarat in a strong position to become a primary settlement city with the support and investment of all tiers of government.

[3]SCoA (2016); 15; RAI et al. (2019); J. Van Kooy et al. (2019).
[4]A. Samad et al., *Rethinking Socio-Economic Models for Migrant Settlement* (2022).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ballarat's Readiness

Ballarat is Victoria's largest regional inland city, demonstrating 'rural cosmopolitanism' through pairing regional development with a commitment to diversity. Strategically located an hour from Melbourne, the city contributes greatly to regional development, offering strong services, infrastructure and economic opportunities, and further investment slated for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. These efforts as a regional leader go hand-in-hand with a commitment to an inclusive and supportive environment as a regional settlement city for migrants and refugees. Ballarat embraces diversity and values the vital economic, social and cultural contributions of new overseas arrivals and diverse communities who already call the region home.

Ballarat has historically been a secondary settlement location. The city has steadily built up a coordinated services sector providing settlement support to people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Local partnerships between settlement and mainstream providers, businesses, volunteers, community groups, multicultural leaders, entrepreneurs, and diverse communities represented by 30 cultural and faith associations have played a key role. The City of Ballarat has also put Ballarat on the map as Australia's first Intercultural City, a Welcoming City and a Refugee Welcome Zone.

These commitments include measurable settlement outcomes and the enabling of migrants and emerging communities.

Ballarat's Multicultural Profile

A culturally diverse community is innovative, strong and socially vibrant. Ballarat has received a higher number of overseas arrivals compared with the regional Victorian average over the last 20 years. According to the 2021 Census, for people living in Ballarat:

- 11% of the population were born overseas and represent 89 different nationalities, with 57% having arrived in Australia since 2001.
- Main countries of birth are the United Kingdom, India, New Zealand, China and the Philippines. The fastest growing groups are from Indian and Filipino backgrounds.
- 2,206 new migrants arrived in Australia between 2016-2021 and were living in Ballarat as of December 2021 (65% skilled migration, 34% family and 1% humanitarian streams). In 2021 alone, 476 new migrants moved to Ballarat.
- 7% speak a Language Other Than English (LOTE) at home. The top LOTE include Mandarin, Punjabi, Malayalam, Filipino/Tagalog and Hindi. From 2016-2021, this number increased by 47% with largest increases Punjabi, Malayalam, Nepali and Hindi.
- The largest religious group is Western (Roman) Catholic (21%), with Christianity the major affiliation at 42%. 48% have no religion. Over 4,000 people affiliate with other religions including Hinduism (which had the largest increase from 2016-2021), Buddhism, Islam and Judaism. Ballarat has an Interfaith Network and diverse faith associations.
- There are significant gaps in data available at the local level, in particular on intersectional experiences of settlement and temporary visa numbers. We estimate that a further 20 long-term residents are on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV), and at least a further 10 residents are on various bridging visas. We recommend further investment in data collection.

Regional Settlement

Benefits of regional settlement extend to both regional areas and migrants. Economic, social and cultural contributions by migrants can reinvigorate regions, while migrants benefit from accessing affordable housing, employment opportunities and successful integration pathways.

Policy Focus on Regions

Regional settlement is a priority for Federal and State governments, especially after COVID. The Australian Migration Program has an additional 34,000 places in the skilled stream for regional communities and a focus on regional settlement for humanitarian entrants. The Victorian Government's Migration Program also includes regional incentives (see Appendix).

Encouraging regional skilled migration is important as most migrants prefer urban locations, with only 17% of skilled stream migrants nominating a regional location in 2020-21. In the same period, the Australian Government settled 64% of humanitarian entrants in regional areas.

Success Factors in Regional Settlement

There are several factors to consider when measuring successful regional settlement. Key measures that we have factored in when assessing Ballarat's settlement capacity are listed below. Many are embedded in Ballarat through a coordinated approach and ongoing commitment to inclusion as an Intercultural City.

- **Australian Government Criteria for Regional Settlement.** In determining suitable regional locations, the Government prioritises local service capacity and infrastructure, community engagement and opportunities for place-based approaches, communities that address the priority areas of the National Settlement Framework, co-ordinated approaches across government, education and support for employers who employ migrants, long-term job opportunities that match migrants' skills and ambitions, and presence of regional champions.
- **Settlement Council of Australia's Critical Settlement Success Factors.** The 4 critical success factors identified are availability of settlement services, appropriateness of infrastructure and services, capacity for economic integration, and willingness of the community to engage with migrant and refugee populations.
- **Regional Australia Institute's Steps to Settlement Success Toolkit.** Regional Australia Institute (RAI), the Scanlon Foundation and Welcoming Cities have developed a toolkit for rural and regional communities to implement successful settlement. This step-by-step guide highlights key players and actions for settlement success. The 7 building blocks are initiating a settlement strategy, organising and consulting local community, welcoming and hosting new migrants, securing employment for migrants, securing housing for new migrants, fostering community cohesion, and considering culture, customs and environment.
- **Best Practice Regional Models Across Australia.** Many regional areas demonstrate initiative in supporting successful settlement. Best practice examples involve collaboration and partnerships between services, such as the Certificate II in Engineering for Karen migrants in Bendigo, the Stepping Stones micro-enterprise program for migrant women in regional Victoria, the WDA's Settlement Committee and Migration Strategy in regional Victoria, the Ignite program providing entrepreneur training in regional NSW, the Ask Maria app equipping migrant women with legal advice in South Australia, and the Our Place program enabling migrant communities to begin social initiatives in Queensland.

- **Other Crucial Factors: Strong CALD Communities, Lived Experience, Local Efforts.** In addition to the factors above, we consider the existence of established ethno-specific and CALD communities, a settlement process informed by people with lived experience of settlement, and coordinated local efforts to be essential factors of implementing and benchmarking successful settlement.

Challenges and Recommendations for Regional Settlement

In response to the Australian Government's recent discussion papers Next Steps to Improve Australia's Settlement and Integration of Refugees and Australia's Humanitarian Program 2022-23, the Australian settlement sector provided submissions that offered important insights into the current challenges of regional settlement The suggestions are summarised below, and we have proposed locally specific recommendations for addressing these challenges.

Challenge 1: Long-Term, Flexible and Responsive Service Funding
Settlement services play a critical role in successful regional settlement. During COVID, many settlement services were scaled back. Severe funding pressures remain and do not reflect growth in regional settlement, resulting in service gaps. The inflexibility of funding prevents redirection of resources to regional areas and migrants in need.

Local Recommendation 1: Governments plan more place-based responsive resourcing through flexible and ongoing funding and investment in targeted settlement for Ballarat and the region.

Challenge 2: Social Infrastructure
Social infrastructure, including welcoming environments, services and emergency management, play a key role in positive settlement experiences. Effective infrastructure in regional areas can be limited due to the geographical spread of communities, lack of cultural competency of mainstream providers and the need for targeted efforts to provide a welcoming experience.

Local Recommendation 2: Settlement providers maintain and enhance strategic partnerships in Ballarat and across the region to address and advocate for social infrastructure needs.

Challenge 3: Housing
Although affordable housing has been an influential driver of regional settlement, population movement to regional locations during the pandemic has had a significant impact on housing availability and affordability. The cost of rental accommodation has tripled, and there are fewer housing vacancies in some regional areas.

Local Recommendation 3: Undertake advocacy, informed by consultation with CALD communities in Ballarat and the region, to ensure government housing strategies are affordable, culturally appropriate, and accessible for meeting migrant needs.

Challenge 4: Employment
There is a lack of available employment options, career pathways and support, often resulting in migrants taking on lower-skilled and insecure work in regional areas. Challenges are exacerbated by experiences of discrimination in job seeking and in workplaces.

Local Recommendation 4: Ballarat takes a whole-of-city approach to address employment issues, including educating businesses on recognising migrant needs, skills and capabilities, and the benefits of diversity in the workplace (see Case Study 5 and Innovation 2).

Mapping and Strengthening Regional Settlement

The ingredients for and challenges to successful settlement are clearly known. Ensuring that these insights translate into practice is another matter. A key aim of this Report is to connect insights about successful regional settlement to Ballarat's current settlement capacity. In 2022, we gathered input through designing and implementing 3 new research tools:

1.Settlement Services Mapping Framework

Our innovative Framework is the first systematic and collaborative mapping of regional settlement provision against SCoA's National Settlement Outcomes Standards. The NSOS are a best practice measure for benchmarking successful settlement, and cover 10 areas: Education and Training, Employment, Health and Wellbeing, Housing, Language Services, Transport, Civic Participation, Family and Social Support, Justice and Finance. Key settlement providers in Ballarat assessed their services against the NSOS in order to determine strengths and priorities. Insights were also included from multicultural leaders representing cultural and faith associations.

Our Framework clearly illustrates that Ballarat is performing strongly against each of the NSOS by offering services to new arrivals and CALD communities through both settlement and mainstream pathways. The Framework identifies key strength areas as the coordinated approach to delivering Education and Training Support, Employment Support, and Health and Wellbeing Support. This includes a range of English language services, employment mentoring programs, Industry Networking Nights and coordinated COVID support.

The emerging areas of future priority are Financial, Housing and Transport Support, which require sustained advocacy and investment. Other structural gaps

highlighted include a consistent lack of funding to deliver services that align with the NSOS areas and a lack of cultural competency and safety among mainstream providers. The Framework points to the need for more employment opportunities and mentoring programs for new arrivals, orientation and welcome support, locally based legal immigration advice, cultural competency training, and specific support for women, youth and people experiencing marginalisation.

2.Settling in Ballarat Survey 2022

People living in Ballarat who were born overseas shared their lived experiences of settling in Ballarat, including accessing services. A total of 102 responses were received, and showed:

- *Established CALD Communities.* 39% moved to Ballarat over 10 years ago and 19% over 5 years ago. 80% had citizenship or permanent residency, and 19% were over 65 years old. This speaks to Ballarat's long history of migration and diversity.
- *Breadth of Diversity.* Over 35 countries of origin were represented. The most responses were from Indian residents, Ballarat's fastest growing country of origin.
- *Secondary Destination.* Many first moved to Australia and later to Ballarat, which may impact settlement services eligibility criteria on arrival to Ballarat and partly explain why most did not access settlement services (88%), except for the Adult Migrant English Program (7%) and Employment mentoring (2%) which have no time limit on eligibility.
- *High Civic Engagement.* Respondents contributed to the community in many ways, including involvement in cultural and faith organisations (36%), volunteering (32%) and as Intercultural Ambassadors (5%).

Responses highlighted that the benefits of settlement in Ballarat for CALD communities include the close-knit friendly

community and the compact size and slower pace, with the amenities of a big city, and within reach of many attractions. Challenges included the isolation people face upon settling, difficulties finding employment, affordable housing and transport, discrimination and lack of diversity. Many would like more accessible support services, more connections with both CALD communities and the wider community, and more acknowledgment of diversity.

Respondents indicated that the level of support they received on arrival to Ballarat was average. When asked about settlement areas based on the NSOS, responses corresponded with the Mapping Framework:

- Strongest areas are Health and Wellbeing Support (54% good/excellent), Education and Training Support (53% good/excellent), Support to Participate in the Community/Civic Participation (51%) and Employment Support (47.5%)
- Areas rated average are Family and Social Support (41% good/excellent), Language Support (36% good/excellent) and Justice Support (27% good/excellent)
- Areas in need of improvement are Financial Support (57% below average/low), Transport Support (42.5% below average/low), and Housing Support (41%)

Linking with insights about successful regional settlement, it is clear that Ballarat has several key strengths identified. These include a variety of settlement services and infrastructure that are appropriate and tailored, a robust economy with capacity for integration of newcomers, a welcoming local community and strong CALD community representation. There are also identified areas for improvement, such as social infrastructure, housing, transport, financial support, employment opportunities and increasing cultural competency.

3. Local Case Studies and Innovations

We featured local case studies and innovations throughout the Report that showcase the importance of strategic partnerships and collaborations:

CASE STUDY 1: Collaborative Leadership on Diversity
Ballarat takes a collective approach to diversity, including policy leadership from the City of Ballarat and strategic partnerships with settlement organisations, community groups, multicultural leaders and multicultural businesses.

CASE STUDY 2: Combating Racism in Regional Victoria
Ballarat is an anti-racism champion, hosting workshops with service providers and the general public as well as intercultural music workshops with school children to develop skills in recognising and responding to racism.

CASE STUDY 3: Belonging and Participation of Afghan and Hazara Residents
Local efforts to support Afghan and Hazara refugees over the past 10 years have resulted in them giving back to the Ballarat community through cultural, social and sporting volunteer initiatives, and internationally by providing aid to vulnerable people in Afghanistan.

CASE STUDY 4: Multicultural Dialogues
Ballarat has strong consultative mechanisms through regular dialogues with multicultural leaders. A recent dialogue focused on increasing the skilled migration intake and involved government, businesses, and industry and multicultural leaders.

CASE STUDY 5: COVID Coordination
Ballarat has demonstrated its capacity to rapidly mobilise partnerships and networks through collaborations between BRMC, health providers and multicultural leaders to deliver in-language COVID information, vaccinations and food relief.

INNOVATION 1: Ballarat Welcome Project
This BRMC initiative funded by the Victorian Government provides Welcome Tours and Welcome Morning Teas to newcomers to Ballarat, connecting them with essential settlement and mainstream services and developing cultural competency of participating services.

INNOVATION 2: Employment Diversity Initiatives
Four local initiatives promote diversity in employment through professional mentoring of refugees (Ballarat Professional Mentoring Program), job placements for CALD jobseekers in hospitality and tourism (Diversify Project), training and placement of migrant healthcare professionals (HealthCare International), and sponsorship of skilled migration (MAXITrans).

Our Commitments

What emerges is a picture of an active and diverse Ballarat community with high civic engagement, strong settlement services, coordinated approaches to addressing challenges, and a commitment to ongoing diversity and inclusion. Ballarat is ideally placed and ready to be a leading regional settlement city and to engage with Federal and State Governments to increase primary settlement. The combined and collective commitment to our intercultural economy and community position us well to step up in 2023 and beyond.

The EVOLVE Partnership makes the following collective commitments to promote diversity and ensure continued strong sustainable settlement:

Promoting Diversity, Interculturalism and Inclusion. We will promote a welcoming and inclusive city that positions diversity as an advantage.
Coordinated Services and Infrastructure. We will keep our strong coordinated services and infrastructures vibrant through regular committees, meetings, partnerships and events.
Collaboration with CALD Communities. We will ensure that services and policies are informed by lived experience through co-design with the communities they impact.
Research and Policy Advocacy. We will conduct ongoing research to build and maintain a robust evidence base, track opportunities and challenges, and advocate for solutions.
Addressing Known Gaps and Challenges. We will work collaboratively to proactively and innovatively address known gaps and challenges.

Next Steps

Successfully delivering upon our commitments and readiness requires investment and support from all tiers of government to ensure settlement is undertaken sustainably. This includes investment in regional development and infrastructure such as housing, transport and employment opportunities, as well as settlement services and funding.

With the right support, we are ready to increase our intakes through skilled and humanitarian streams as well as community-based programs. We are already innovating in the area of skilled migration and are enhancing our community and place-based migration models. We look forward to working with all tiers of government to provide successful and sustainable settlement in Ballarat into the future.

BALLARAT'S READINESS

> An inclusive intercultural community that celebrates diversity and is welcoming to all cultures.[5]
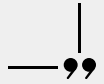
Ballarat is the largest inland city in Victoria, with a population of 113,763.[6] Located within one hour of metropolitan Melbourne, and nearby to regional centres Geelong, Bendigo and key rural cities Ararat, Stawell and Horsham, the city is strategically positioned at the heart of major freight, tourism and commuter transport routes that connect to industrial and agricultural centres and provides services, connections and economic drivers to support the region of around half a million people.[7]

Nhill

Horsham

Shepparton

Wodonga
Wangaratta

Bendigo

Stawell

Ararat

VICTORIA

Ballarat

150 Kilometres

Melbourne

Geelong

Morwell

Warrnambool

Fig 3. Map of Ballarat in the region

[5] City of Ballarat, *Intercultural Plan* 2022-2026 (2022).
[6] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census* (2021).
[7] Regional Living Victoria, 'In a Class of its Own' (2022).

The RAI notes that regional Australia 'contributes one third of total national economic output'[8] and is therefore of vital importance to the future of Australia's economy.

Ballarat demonstrates 'rural cosmopolitanism'[9] through pairing commitments to regional development with strong support for regional settlement and promotion of diversity.

A recent report by Western Sydney University and Charles Darwin University points out that developing a sustainable post-COVID regional settlement agenda will centre on a 'triple nexus' of economic development, community empowerment and long-term settlement.[10]

Ballarat contributes greatly to regional development through its established services and infrastructure. This includes renowned educational institutions, a high-quality healthcare system, a longstanding and evolving manufacturing and construction industry, and job opportunities across diverse sectors,[11] in addition to natural attractions, thriving galleries, theatres, festivals and restaurants. The 2021 opening of the Ballarat GovHub[12] launched a multimillion-dollar business precinct, and investment in housing, infrastructure and social planning is slated for the Ballarat West Employment Zone[13] and in preparation for Ballarat's role as one of the regional hosts of the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Ballarat's efforts as a leader in regional development go hand-in-hand with an ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive, diverse and supportive environment and providing a welcoming regional settlement location for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. We understand and demonstrate that to thrive as a region it is imperative to embrace diversity and value the vital economic, social and cultural contributions of overseas arrivals and the diverse communities who have made regional locations their home.

Ballarat has historically been a secondary settlement location, attracting skilled migrants, international students and humanitarian entrants.[14] In partnership with dedicated volunteer and community groups, the city has steadily built up a coordinated services sector. CALD communities, represented by 30 cultural and faith associations, also provide extensive support through mentoring, community capacity building and opportunities for social connection. The fastest growing communities are from Indian and Filipino backgrounds.

As the local government body, the City of Ballarat has played a crucial role in promoting diversity, placing Ballarat on the map as Australia's first Intercultural City[15] as well as a Welcoming City[16] and a Refugee Welcome Zone.[17] These commitments demonstrate measurable sustainable settlement outcomes and the enabling of migrants and emerging communities.

The local efforts of settlement and mainstream providers, businesses, community organisations and volunteer groups have also played a key role in supporting diversity in the region. Strategic partnerships and collaborations have ensured coordinated service provision, consultation and involvement of multicultural and First Nations communities, and opportunities to address regional settlement challenges.

[8] RAI, *Report of the Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia* (2020).
[9] S. Schech, 'Silent Bargain or Rural Cosmopolitanism?' (2014).
[10] A, Samad et al., *Rethinking Socio-Economic Models for Migrant Settlement* (2022).
[11] Ballarat Content Hub (2022).
[12] Regional Development Victoria, 'Ballarat GovHub' (2022).
[13] Development Victoria, 'Ballarat West Employment Zone' (2022).
[14] M. Piper and Associates, *Regional Humanitarian Settlement Pilot: Ballarat* (2009).
[15] Council of Europe, 'Ballarat Joins the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Network' (2017).
[16] Welcoming Cities (2022).
[17] Refugee Council of Australia, 'What is a Refugee Welcome Zone?' (15 Sep. 2022).

CASE STUDY 1
Collaborative Leadership Promoting Diversity

In 2016, the City of Ballarat became the first Intercultural City in Australia. Ballarat has led the way for other Australian cities to join this global network of 156 cities led by the Council of Europe, with the Cities of Melton, Maribyrnong and Salisbury (South Australia) following suit. This demonstrates Ballarat's commitment to being an innovative leader in supporting diversity.

Being an Intercultural City means promoting and supporting equality, diversity and interaction between diverse groups. In Australia, this means a commitment to positive relationships between Australian-born residents and those originally from other countries.

The Intercultural Cities Index tracks achievements and challenges over time through 11 indicators.[18] According to the Index, in 2016 the City of Ballarat ranked:

- Fourth in the world with an average of 84% among the global sample of 80 cities
- Second in the world among cities with less than 200,000 inhabitants
- First in the world among cities with less than 15% of foreign-born residents.

The City of Ballarat's Intercultural 2022-26 Plan is part of a suite of intersectional inclusion plans including a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan, Ageing Well Strategy and LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Plan. The Intercultural Plan focuses on responsive services, active citizenship, leadership and advocacy, and maximising and valuing diversity. This includes ongoing commitments and undertaking refreshed accreditation as an Intercultural City, Welcoming City and Refugee Welcome Zone.

Welcoming Cities provides another channel for local governments to lead in supporting diversity, seeking to 'equip local governments and community leaders to increase the sense of belonging and participation for both receiving and new and emerging communities.'

The Welcoming Cities Standard[19] is a framework for local councils to benchmark diversity and inclusion policies and practices, identify further opportunities and assess progress over time.

Ballarat's success as an intercultural leader is due to collective impact. Strategic partnerships and collaborations between the Council, settlement providers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural leaders, and community organisations occur regularly through forums such as the Ballarat Regional Settlement Advocacy Committee (BRSAC), Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASSN), Multicultural Pandemic Response and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Group, Ballarat Interfaith Network, Multicultural Dialogues with BRMC's 30 cultural and faith associations, the City of Ballarat's Intercultural Advisory Committee, Intercultural Ambassadors Program, Koorie Engagement Action Group and the Ballarat Friends of Ainaro Community Committee.

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[18] The 11 indicators are commitment, education system, neighbourhoods, public services, business and labour market, cultural and civil life policies, public spaces, mediation and conflict resolution, language, media, international outlook, intelligence/competence, welcoming and governance.
[19] Welcoming Cities, 'Standard and Accreditation' (2022).

Together, these strategic and collaborative forums enable the coordination and improvement of services, promotion of diversity, provision of information and orientation to new arrivals in many languages, delivery of cultural competency and anti-racism training, and hosting of events throughout the year by cultural and faith associations, such as Harmony Festival and Refugee Week.

Diversity is also strengthened through Ballarat's thriving entrepreneurial multicultural businesses. Migrants play a large role as entrepreneurs and professional leaders in Ballarat, launching companies in sectors such as retail, hospitality, transport and engineering. Social enterprises have also been successful, such as clothing businesses Mat Tetni and A Tuk, and A Pot of Courage, Ballarat's first intercultural café and catering business. Staffed by migrant and refugee women from around the world, A Pot of Courage showcases diverse global foods from countries such as Malaysia, Colombia, Pakistan, Indonesia and Vietnam. Since opening in 2020, A Pot of Courage has trained and supported 34 staff members from diverse backgrounds.

Fig 4. 2022 Intercultural Ambassadors

INNOVATION 1
The Welcome Project

There is high demand for effective service provision in regional areas to enable people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to adapt to unfamiliar environments and gain information about services required for successful settlement. Although there are many services available in Ballarat to improve the quality of life of community members, migrants may lack knowledge of available services, especially in the early stages of their settlement journeys.

To address this gap, BRMC launched the Ballarat Welcome Project in 2022, funded by the Victorian Government and in collaboration with multicultural organisations and local stakeholders. The Welcome Project will run regular Welcome Tours of essential services in Ballarat, such as Council buildings, health services, public libraries, sport and recreation facilities, police and legal services, educational institutions and community organisations, and will hear presentations from staff at these facilities. BRMC also hosts a regular Welcome Morning Tea to provide newcomers with the opportunity to meet other community members, including those from local cultural and faith associations and service providers.

Through these combined events, participants experience the welcoming culture of Ballarat, which can lead to faster and more effective settlement. This will allow multicultural people to feel a sense of belonging and enjoy their lives with higher quality in Ballarat in the future. In addition, the project will benefit participating mainstream service providers who will further develop their knowledge of the settlement process and increase culturally appropriate service provision in the future by tailoring their services to the needs of multicultural communities.

Ballarat's Multicultural Profile

Australia's cultural diversity is growing according to the 2021 Australian Census of Population and Housing[20] (see Appendix). In Ballarat,[21] this increasing diversity contributes to a strong and vibrant community.

Ballarat has received a higher number of overseas arrivals compared with the regional Victorian average over the last 20 years: 11% of the Ballarat population were born overseas, representing 89 nationalities.

In 2021, 476 new migrants moved to Ballarat through humanitarian, family and skilled streams. Between 2016-2021, the number of people speaking a LOTE at home increased by 2,543 or 47%. The largest increases were Punjabi (+518), Malayalam (+232), Nepali (+174) and Hindi (+165). The fastest growing religious affiliation between 2016-2021 was Hinduism (+704). Ballarat also has an active Interfaith Network and diverse faith associations.

[20] ABS, *Census* (2021).
[21] Department of Home Affairs, *Settlement Reports Dataset* (2021).

113,763 population of Ballarat at August 2021

12,880 residents were born overseas (89 different nationalities)

29% of residents had at least one parent born overseas

57% of residents from overseas arrived in Australia since 2001

7,976 residents were from non-English speaking backgrounds

Main countries of birth (other than Australia)

UK (3078), India (1846), NZ (969), China (677), Philippines (631), Netherlands (495), USA (314), Germany (310), South Africa (268), Malaysia (249), Sri Lanka (249), Nepal (212)

7% of people living in Ballarat speak a language other than English at home

10% of those that speak another language are not proficient in English

More than 30 languages spoken

Main languages spoken (other than English):

Mandarin (968), Punjabi (764), Malayalam (466), Filipino/Tagalog (441), Hindi (387), Urdu (233), Spanish (227), Nepali (213), Sinhalese (206), Italian (191), Arabic (187), Vietnamese (186), German (172), Cantonese (165), Greek (151), Japanese (151), Tamil (149), Thai (139), French (136)

65% of migrants living in Ballarat came to Australia through a skilled migration program since 2016

Christianity (42%) is the major religious denomination in Ballarat however 48% have no religion or secular beliefs. There are also over 4000 people affiliated with other religions: Hinduism (1320), Buddhism (873), Islam (765), Judaism (56), other religious groups (1105).

Recent settlement numbers:

2206 new migrants arrived in Australia between January 2016–December 2021 and were living in Ballarat as of December 2021

65% through the skilled migration stream

34% through the family migration stream

1% through the humanitarian stream

Fig 5. City of Ballarat Intercultural Plan 2022-26, p17-18 (data from the 2021 Australian Census of Population and Housing and Department of Home Affairs Settlement Reports)

Migration and Settlement in Victoria[22] 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021		
	Victoria	**Ballarat**
Humanitarian Entrants	1,764 Most common ethnic groups: Iraqi, Pashtun, Hazara, Tajik. Most common countries of origin: Iraq, Afghanistan	9
Family Reunion	27,808	189
Skilled Migrants	33,085	278

Note on Data Gaps: Temporary Visas and Intersectionality

The information presented here only tells us a part of the story of diversity in our community. There are significant gaps in data available at the Local Government Area level. Two gaps in particular that we draw attention to are temporary visa categories and intersectional data:

1. Temporary Visas

There are few channels to accurately capture data on how many people are on temporary visas in regional areas.[23] Research has shown people within this group, especially those seeking asylum, experience significant barriers to safety and security.[24] In addition, this number tends to be fluid with people moving regularly. Based on local data gathered from our settlement provider networks, we estimate that there are currently approximately 20 people on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV), and at least 10 people on bridging or other temporary visas living in Ballarat. This number peaked at over 50 people with the introduction of SHEV incentives for people seeking asylum to live or work in regional areas. However, the increasing uncertainty of realising these incentives in terms of pathways to permanent settlement and the general lack of momentum in regional settlement during COVID has led many SHEV holders to return to Melbourne where

hey have stronger community connections and the possibility of higher wages. This speaks to the need for more consistent communication from the Federal Government around the outcomes of these incentives, as well as more effective data collection mechanisms.

2. Intersectionality

Demographic data is important to inform settlement planning, yet current data is insufficient to enable large-scale intersectional analysis. It is important to acknowledge that the settlement experience is contextual and influenced by intersecting factors (e.g. sexuality, gender identity, abilities, age, class). Shared ethnicity, faith or language do not necessarily equate to shared identity, experiences or needs. We acknowledge existing intersectional research[25] and note this limitation in the data for our Report. We recommend that future research employ an intersectional lens.

[22] DHA, *Settlement Reports Dataset* (2021).
[23] The DHA provides information on bridging visa numbers by postcode for the most populated areas, but outside urban centres where people are concentrated there is not enough critical mass for these numbers to be recorded.
[24] C. Fleay & L. Hartley (2016); J. Van Kooy & D. Bowman (2019).
[25] S. Ressia et al. (2017); F. Robards et al. (2020); M. Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. (2021); Migration Council of Australia & SETSCoP (2022).

CASE STUDY 2
Combating Regional Racism

Ballarat is at the forefront of efforts to combat racism in regional Victoria. BRMC has been implementing a local initiative, No to Racism in Western Regional Victoria, supported through the Victorian Government. This includes delivering Anti-Racism Active Bystander Training, and promoting intercultural exchange including arts and music engagement, and interfaith activities. BRMC Chair Joy Sawiche is also an appointed member of the Victorian Government's Ministerial Anti-Racism Taskforce due to report outcomes in 2023.

Anti-Racism Active Bystander Training
This locally developed program, delivered by trained people with lived experience of racism, develops an understanding of race, empathy and identities, along with strategies to intervene in daily life. Interactive workshops are run with 15-25 participants across 2.5 hours, using videos, storytelling and group activities. Training focuses on supporting people who witness racism to take action, shifting attitudes to a whole-of-community responsibility mindset.

In 2022, 11 sessions have been held with Stockland Wendouree, Child and Family Services (CAFS), Ballarat Hospice Care, Salvation Army, BRMC staff, Multicultural Leaders Group, Ballarat Neighbourhood House, CMY, City of Ballarat Youth Ambassadors, Grampians Health Ballarat and Horsham, and one public workshop. A majority of participants agreed that they would be more likely to intervene if they saw or heard something racist after the training.

> *I will be more proactive if I see racism within the community.*

> *I will listen more carefully and better appreciate other people's experiences of racism.*

> *I will let people know I'm uncomfortable when they make racial comments, perhaps try and educate why their comments are hurtful/not appropriate, and report when I see/hear racist comments/behaviour.*

Intercultural Engagement Music Program

Local musician Stella Savy of Coco Sounds has been engaged to deliver an awareness program for school children in Ballarat. Over 4 weeks, students share global music and cultural values, and learn artistic skills. Sessions include an Acknowledgement of First Nations peoples and themes of Indigenous Australia, Migration, Difference, and Living Together Beyond Race. Students have meaningful time to understand multicultural nationalism and embrace communities beyond race. In 2022, sessions were held with 70 students at Invermay Park Primary School and 86 students at Canadian Lead, with another program planned at St Alpius.

The Intercultural Music Program is also run by Valanga Khoza and Stella for general community members. People are guided through Valanga's journey via refugee camps to Australia, lived experiences of racism, and music that has carried through the oppression of Apartheid.

> *I learned about how to deal with racism.*

> *I enjoyed the program because I learned more about multicultural stuff and the music.*

> *Everything was good, learning multicultural songs, more about cultures, and everything else.*

Fig 6. Intercultural Music Workshop

REGIONAL SETTLEMENT

> Regional Australia contributes one-third of total national economic output. Its prosperity is thus critical to the future of the nation.[26]

The benefits of regional settlement for both regional areas and migrants are well documented.[27] Migrants make significant economic contributions through population growth and addressing skill and labour shortages, representing a higher percentage of working age people and higher birth rates that can reinvigorate regional areas.[28] Research also highlights the social and cultural contributions that migrants make to regional communities.[29] Migrants contribute to social and cultural capital by enriching the local community and enabling meaningful engagement across diverse cultures.[30] Benefits of regional settlement for migrants include more affordable housing, employment opportunities, participation in workplace and school communities, and successful integration facilitated through welcoming local communities.[31]

Policy Focus on Regions

The Federal and State Governments recognise the importance of regional settlement through regional incentives within the Australian Migration Program,[32] as well as within the Victorian Government's 2022-23 Skilled Migration Program[33] (see Appendix).

As the Australian Government seeks to increase the immigration intake and help the economy rebound from COVID following a period of reduced arrivals, regional settlement is a priority. This includes the commitment of an additional 34,000 places in the skilled stream for regional communities and a continued focus on regional settlement for humanitarian entrants.

It is important to encourage regional skilled migration. The latest Migration Program figures show most migrants coming to Australia choose capital cities as their preferred settlement location, with only 17% of skilled stream migrants nominating a regional settlement location in 2020-21.

In contrast, the Australian Government settled 64% of humanitarian entrants during the same period in regional areas.[34] The proportion of humanitarian entrants settling in regional areas increased from one-in-twenty in 2001 to one-in-five in 2011[35] and from 42% in 2018–19 to 64% in 2020-21.[36]

[26] RAI, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee* (2019).
[27] G. Hugo (2013); FECCA (2015); N. Klocker et al. (2021).
[28] G. Hugo et al. (2013); FECCA (2015); H. Feist et al. (2015).
[29] K. Cooper et al. (2022); T. Patil et al. (2019).
[30] FECCA (2015); SSI (2020).
[31] O. Curry et al., 'What Is "Successful" Resettlement? (2018).
[32] DHA, 'Regional Migration' (2021).
[33] Victoria State Government, 'Live in Melbourne' (2022).
[34] SCoA, *Submission: Australia's Humanitarian Program 2022-23* (2022).
[35] SCoA, *Exploring Options* (2016).
[36] SCoA, *Submission to Australia's Humanitarian Program 2022-23* (2022).

CASE STUDY 3
Belonging and Participation of Afghan and Hazara Residents

The Ballarat community has extended support and taken an active interest in refugees and people seeking asylum in the region, including a group of young people who fled persecution in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Long-term relationships, critical support and connection have fostered their belonging and have enhanced local understanding of their situation and the continuing challenges faced by them and their families across the world.

A group of high school aged youth, mostly of Hazara cultural background and Shia faith, lived in community detention in Daylesford and Ballarat between 2012-2015. Ballarat residents visited and befriended them, and when many decided to stay after their release, they benefited from supported schooling and personal support in Ballarat, accommodation options (sometimes care and housing provided in residents' homes), as well as education and training opportunities and other local supports. There were various supporters, including BRASSN, Rural Australians for Refugees, Mount Clear Secondary College, Ballarat Grammar School, House of Welcome, church and faith groups, Ballarat City Football Club and many families and individuals.

In turn these young men have given back to the Ballarat community, with many choosing to stay in Ballarat to work and study. They have shared their culture with Ballarat through volunteering initiatives such as the Afghan Tea House supported by CMY, Community Welcome Walks led by Hazaras, public speaking, presentations to Council in Chambers and community and church groups, regular kebab community dinners, 2 Intercultural Ambassadorships and several emerging local businesses. At least 20 young people from the original cohort and others who have come since are working, renting and investing in homes, and starting families and businesses in Ballarat. They have engaged in cultural, sporting and community involvement such as the Interkultura World Game regional soccer festival tournaments that BRMC held in Ballarat for regional refugee youth.

This community of refugees are now also actively making a difference through the Ballarat Afghan Action Group (BAAG). BAAG, originally Ballarat Afghan Hazara Association, was formed in 2021 by members of the local Afghan and wider community from BRASSN to provide opportunities for local Hazara community members to socialise and gain access to housing, work and other opportunities. Regular social activities are coordinated with Victorian Government support through the Home and Community Care Program for Young People team at BRMC. With support from Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees and BRMC in 2022, BAAG has become an independent incorporated association that continues local activities and also provides aid to people currently facing crisis in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban rule was reinstated in 2021, an economic and environmental crisis has led to unemployment and food insecurity, with 90% of Afghans facing severe poverty. BAAG responded to the obvious distress and threat by raising funds and collaborating with partners in Afghanistan (Payam Jawanan) to distribute emergency aid to those in need. The first round of A$13,000 supplied winter food aid and urgent medical treatment to 64 families in the regional and

rural mountain areas of Ghazni (Nahor), where international donors do not have access. By spring, the situation in rural areas had begun to improve but was worsening in the cities, with unemployment rates at 96%. The second round of A$13,500 aid went to 84 families from diverse ethnic backgrounds needing support in Ghazni, some with connections and family in Ballarat. The third round of A$7,000 in aid will be focused on women who are oppressed under the Taliban regime.

Fig. 7 Recipients in Ghazni, photo by BAAG

Success Factors in Regional Settlement

There are several factors to consider when measuring successful regional settlement. In this section, we outline key success measures such as government criteria, peak body and settlement sector considerations, and best practice regional examples. As the Report will demonstrate, these factors are well embedded in Ballarat, a regional location with a coordinated approach to settlement and an ongoing commitment to inclusion and diversity as an Intercultural City.

Australian Government Criteria in Determining Regional Settlement Locations

The Government[37] considers that the continued focus on humanitarian regional settlement requires a sustainable and coordinated approach on the ground, prioritising the needs of humanitarian entrants as well as regional communities to ensure success. In determining suitable regional locations, the Government prioritises:[38]

- Local service capacity and infrastructure
- Community engagement and opportunities for place-based approaches

- Receiving communities that address the priority settlement areas of the National Settlement Framework (prioritising English language, employment and education)
- A co-ordinated approach across the 3 tiers of government
- Education and support for employers who want to, and do employ migrants, for example:
  - cultural awareness training
  - organising English language support for employees
  - awareness of migrant qualifications and expectations
- Long-term job opportunities that match migrants' skills and ambitions
- Presence of regional settlement champions in the receiving and relocating communities.

Settlement Council of Australia's Critical Success Factors in Regional Settlement

In addition to the NSOS that we use to benchmark and map Ballarat's settlement service provision later in the Report, SCoA has detailed the following critical success factors for regional settlement.[39]

Critical Success Factors	Considerations
Availability of settlement services	- Existence of at least one Settlement Support Provider (SSP) that is prepared to support the settlement process of migrants and refugees - Adequate funding for SSPs to deliver services required - Willingness of government and local community to commit to a steady flow of migrants and refugees to ensure viability of the SSP
Appropriateness of infrastructure and services	- Existence of suitable infrastructure to resettle sufficient numbers of migrants and refugees to make the site viable in both social and economic terms
Capacity for economic integration	- Initial employment opportunities and capacity for growth - Existence of sufficient housing - Appropriate education facilities for both children and adult migrants and refugees
Willingness of community to engage with migrant and refugee populations	- Demonstrated community commitment to welcome migrants and refugees and a respect for diversity - Existence of local leaders willing to serve as advocates for resettlement - Existence of social and community events - Existence of, or capacity to settle, sufficient numbers of migrant and refugee arrivals to ensure capacity to develop social networks

[37]DHA, *Discussion Paper: Australia's Humanitarian Program 2022–23* (2022).
[38]DHA, 'Humanitarian Settlement in Regional Australia' (2022).
[39]SCoA, *Exploring Options* (2016).

Regional Australia Institute's Steps to Settlement Success

The RAI, in partnership with the Scanlon Foundation and Welcoming Cities, has developed a toolkit for rural and regional communities to implement successful settlement.[40] The toolkit provides a step-by-step guide that highlights key players and actions to take for settlement success. Key ingredients highlighted are:

- Key players: new migrants, governments, local business, local volunteers and community organisations, community champions, steering committees, and migrant and settlement service organisations.
- The 7 building blocks of settlement success:
  1. Initiating a settlement strategy
  2. Organising and consulting local community
  3. Welcoming and hosting new migrants
  4. Securing employment for migrants
  5. Securing housing for new migrants
  6. Fostering community cohesion
  7. Considering culture, customs and environment (for both host communities and new migrants)

Best Practice Regional Models Across Australia

Many regional areas across Australia demonstrate initiative and leadership in supporting successful settlement.[41] A key feature of best practice is collaboration and partnerships between different services such as settlement providers, industry, education providers, health and legal services. We have selected the following examples to showcase the possibilities when there is a willingness to work together to build community capacity and inclusion.

Stepping Stones, Regional Victoria[42]	Stepping Stones to Small Business is a micro-enterprise program for women from refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking backgrounds to achieve financial wellbeing through education and training about small business in Australia. The program is run by the Brotherhood of St Laurence with funding from the Victorian Government and Hume Council. BRMC is a local delivery partner and offers the program in Ballarat and the North West region of Victoria. The program provides a learning environment which is supportive, gender aware and friendly, and actively reduces the barriers that prevent women from mainstream business training. English as an additional language is supported. Through culturally tailored training, workshops, mentoring and holistic support, the program supports women over 3 years to increase business skills, knowledge, and financial capabilities; enhance economic and social participation and networks in the wider community; and reach key milestones towards establishing a small business.

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[40]RAI et al., *Steps to Settlement Success* (2019). The areas in the RAI Toolkit also correspond with success areas outlined in the Welcoming Regions Report by Monash University and Welcoming Cities (2019), which include coordinated strategic consultation, planning and budgeting; welcoming attitudes and cultural awareness in receiving communities; established ethnic communities and multicultural institutions, employment that matches demand with the characteristics of new migrants, availability and accessibility of housing and culturally-appropriate services, and sustainability.

[41]E. Musoni, *Understanding Regional Settlement in Australia* (2019).

[42]E. Williams, Stepping Stones Pave Paths to Enterprise, *Ballarat Times* (17 Aug, 2021).

Certificate II in Engineering Studies, Bendigo Victoria[43]	The Certificate II in Engineering Studies Pilot Program was designed to provide Karen youth living in Bendigo with career pathways. The program was led by Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services who worked in partnership with Bendigo TAFE, local schools, Council and local employers to solve employment challenges faced by young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Bilingual workers played a critical role providing support throughout the program, which delivered formal qualifications for participants who have all found employment or enrolled in further tertiary studies.
Wimmera Settlement Services, Western Regional Victoria[44]	WDA is the peak economic development organisation for the Wimmera Southern-Mallee region promoting economic development opportunities and advocating for regional priority issues. WDA are also funded to deliver Settlement Services to support people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to settle in the region. Services include casework, assistance with driving lessons, homework clubs, social networks and links to other support services. WDA considers migration a primary driver to the prosperity of the region and works with partners and stakeholders to deliver services, support communities and advocate for migration. As part of this work, WDA formed the Wimmera Settlement Committee in 2016 with key service, business and community stakeholders across the region. The organisation commissioned a 2017 report recommending integrated approaches to settlement, as well as a Migration Strategy Review in 2020 committing to the economic and community development approach of community wealth building. A success story has been the settlement of over 200 Karen refugees at Nhill, which has contributed economically and culturally to the town while offering opportunities for employment and social participation to the refugees. Karen settlement has added more than $105 million to the local economy during the decade since it began.[45]
Ignite, Regional NSW[46]	The Ignite program is run by Settlement Services International (SSI) and funded by philanthropy and corporate sectors. The initiative supports entrepreneurs from migrant and refugee backgrounds to establish small business start-ups. Based in Coffs Harbour and Armidale, support is also offered across the Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast and New England areas of NSW, and has recently expanded into Queensland, Victoria and internationally (Canada). The Ignite program is free, confidential and ongoing for entrepreneurs who access tailored support through trained facilitators. A team of experts provide advice and guidance on product development, marketing, financial management, legal and compliance measures. An example of a recent project is the Myanmar Community Agriculture Co-operative in Coffs Harbour, which is now registered as a not-for-profit organisation under NSW Fair Trading. A new project which centres intersectionality is IgniteAbility, which provides a small business entrepreneurship program to people with a disability.[47]

[43]SCoA, *Case Study* (2021).
[44]Wimmera Development Association, 'Settlement Services' (2022).
[45]L. Nowell, *Settling Sustainably Ten Years of Refugee Settlement in Nhill, Western Victoria* (2019).
[46]SSI, 'Ignite Small Business Start Ups', *Ignite* (2022).
[47]SSI, 'IgniteAbility', *Ignite* (2022).

Ask Maria App, South Australia[48]	The Australian Migrant Resource Centre in South Australia collaborated with the Women's Legal Service South Australia to develop an app for migrant and refugee women living in regional and remote South Australia. The app is available in 9 community languages and provides information about women's legal rights, together with information about local support services. The app provides information and support around accessing interpreters, immigration, visas, citizenship, healthy and respectful relationships, housing and financial support.
Our Place, Queensland[49]	The Our Place program is delivered by Centacare Far North Queensland in collaboration with Cairns Safer Streets Taskforce, Neighbourhood Centres, community and faith-based organisations, and primary and high schools. The community-driven program provides opportunities for diverse communities to grow their own social initiatives such as supporting youth, families, social and environmental justice, creative arts, and cultural unity and promotion. During the pandemic, Our Place became a vital tool supporting community safety and wellbeing. The project's community partners collaborated immediately to ensure that communities were receiving crucial health messages and support. A range of stakeholders delivered wellbeing checks on high-risk community members, providing accessible information in language. This was pivotal in ensuring zero COVID cases across humanitarian entrant communities locally.

Other Crucial Factors: Strong CALD Communities, Lived Experience, Local Efforts

In addition to the success factors noted in the examples above, we consider the following to be essential ingredients in implementing and benchmarking successful settlement:

- **Strong CALD Communities.** The existence of strong, established, ethno-specific and CALD communities is essential to the ongoing success of settlement in regional locations. Strong existing CALD communities provide crucial support to newcomers in the form of social connection, orientation and information, and mentoring opportunities.[50]

- **Lived Experience.** For any settlement process to be successful, it must be informed by people with lived experience of settlement.[51] This is an important element of co-design and consultation with those who have first-hand and recent experience of settling.

- **Coordinated Local Efforts.** Although local government has a role under the National Settlement Framework in supporting the settlement of migrants in Australia,[52] the extent to which local governments and communities actively respond to new arrivals varies across regional areas.[53] Local efforts coordinated across the board have been a highly effective channel in addressing regional settlement challenges and achieving successful and sustainable settlement.[54]

[48] Australian Migrant Resource Centre, 'Ask Maria is Live!' (2021).
[49] Our Place – We Are Cairns West (2022).
[50] S. Schech, 'Silent Bargain' (2014).
[51] O. Curry et al. (2018); K. Cooper et al. (2022); Edmund Rice Centre (2022).
[52] DHA, *The National Settlement Framework.*
[53] M. Boese & M. Phillips (2017).
[54] O. Curry et al. (2018); L. Nowell (2019); J. Sawtell et al. (2010); RAI et al. (2019).

CASE STUDY 4
COVID Coordination

Ballarat's strong history of coordinated service provision places the city in a resilient position for rapid crisis and emergency mobilisation. This was evidenced during the pandemic through information, communication, vaccination and aid to local multicultural communities.

Information and Communication

COVID-safe information sessions and forums were provided for multicultural communities by BRMC, Ballarat Health Services (BHS), BCH, Women's Health Grampians (WHG), the City of Ballarat and medical experts. BHS and BRMC led sessions for youth and specific cultural groups. A BRMC COVID Vaccination Help Desk assisted those who had difficulty downloading the vaccination certificate. Multicultural leaders, along with BRMC and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, formed a PREP Network and practiced COVID-safe communications strategies in language through social media and audio messaging. BRMC launched a Creative Sound Lab where multicultural leaders were trained in audio production to enhance messaging capacity and quality. Bicultural workers were also highly effective at delivering COVID-safe messaging.

Vaccination and Mask/RAT Distribution

Eight Multicultural Community Vaccination Pop-Up Hubs were hosted at BRMC in partnership with BCH and Grampians Health, providing 721 doses of vaccines to people from multicultural backgrounds, many who were initially hesitant. By the end of 2021, Ballarat reached a 95% vaccination rate for residents aged 15 and over. Masks and RATs were also distributed in Ballarat and across the Wimmera region, with over 2,000 RATs distributed in June 2022 alone.

> *RATs for our community were very timely, accessible and helpful. We placed them at the Mosque entrance for easy access for members.*
> *(Syed M Sami, Interfaith Officer)*

Fig. 8 COVID Vaccination Hub at Ballarat Welcome Centre

The June 2022 Vaccination Hub was a particularly creative event, with participants receiving Winter Showbags (masks, RATs, hand sanitiser and games for children), hot Sudanese lentil soup, and portraits by local caricature artist David Seery.

Food and Emergency Relief

The Ballarat Food Access Network, a Victorian Government-funded partnership between 10 organisations including BRMC, BCH, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative and SecondBite, ensured access to fresh food for people experiencing food insecurity. BRMC partnered with the Ballarat Italian Association, BRASSN and BCH to provide the 'Living Together Box' of food and essential deliveries twice monthly to 20 multicultural families in financial difficulty. Free food tickets were provided monthly through the BCH 'Farmers to Families Market' program. The Wendouree Cricket Club donated Christmas gifts to families in need. Emergency relief was delivered to multicultural community members in quarantine, as well as BRMC social support visits to senior residents in isolation.

Challenges and Recommendations for Regional Settlement

> " For migration to regional Australia to be successful, it must be sustainable and beneficial for both the local community and for the migrants themselves.[55] "

While the ingredients for successful regional settlement are clearly known, there remain significant challenges. The Australian settlement sector works directly with migrant and refugee background communities and has offered important insights into the current challenges for regional settlement. Key peak bodies and stakeholders, including SCoA, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), Refugee Council of Australia, National Refugee-Led Advisory and Advocacy Group, Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Community of Practice (SETSCoP), and ECCV have recently provided submissions to the Australian Government's discussion papers on Next Steps to Improve Refugee Settlement and Integration in Australia and the Humanitarian Program 2022-23, drawing on extensive sector and community consultations to recommend improvements to regional settlement. In the following section we have summarised the key challenges they raise and have adapted recommendations for addressing these challenges locally.

Challenge 1: Flexible, Responsive and Ongoing Service Funding

Settlement services play a critical role in successful settlement, particularly in regional areas where migrants are less likely to have local connections and access to support. This was apparent during the pandemic when these services were relied upon to liaise with and support many non-English speaking background communities with key health information, using established trusted relationships to reach isolated individuals and groups.[56] Settlement services also play a key role connecting to and building capacity of mainstream services, both in times of crisis and across the board.

Due to COVID and the pause on overseas arrivals, many settlement services were significantly scaled back and are yet to return to pre-COVID capacity. Severe pre-existing funding pressures remain on most Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program service providers. Current funding arrangements have not been adjusted to factor in growth in regional settlement, resulting in service gaps.[57] The inflexibility of current funding prevents redirection of resources to regional areas where demand is growing, as well as implementation of various service roles by settlement providers when required; and reaching migrants who are outside of the 5-year settlement eligibility period.[58] We add, specific to our situation in Ballarat, that community engagement and support activities are not funded in our region and this weakens the foundation for individual client support.

> **Local Recommendation 1:** Governments plan more place-based responsive resourcing through flexible and ongoing funding and investment in targeted settlement for Ballarat and the region.

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[55]DHA, *Discussion Paper* (2022).
[56]SCoA, *Submission to Next Steps* (2022).
[57]SCoA, *Submission: Humanitarian Program* (2022).
[58]SETSCoP (2022).

Challenge 2: Social Infrastructure and Services

Social infrastructure and safe, welcoming environments, together with responsive emergency management and services such as health (including mental health) and education all have a fundamental role to play in achieving positive settlement experiences and the integration of new arrival communities.

Community consultations undertaken by peak settlement bodies highlight that effective social infrastructure and services in regional areas can be limited due to issues such as the wider geographical spread of communities, lower levels of cultural responsiveness amongst mainstream service providers and the absence of targeted efforts to provide a welcoming experience that builds local connections.[59]

Local Recommendation 2: Settlement providers maintain and enhance strategic partnerships in Ballarat and across the region to address and advocate for social infrastructure needs.

Challenge 3: Housing

Although affordable housing has historically been an influential driver of regional settlement, population movement from metropolitan to regional locations during the pandemic has had a significant impact on housing availability and affordability, with the cost [60]of rental accommodations having tripled. There are far fewer housing vacancies in some regional areas which are key settlement locations under the Humanitarian Settlement Program.

Local Recommendation 3: Undertake advocacy, informed by consultation with CALD communities in Ballarat and the region, to ensure government housing strategies are affordable, culturally appropriate and accessible for meeting migrant needs.

Challenge 4: Employment

A lack of skills recognition, available employment options, career pathways and employment support in regional areas often results in migrants and refugees taking on lower-skilled and insecure work. This was evidenced during the pandemic which resulted in higher levels of job losses and financial insecurity for these cohorts.[61] Employment challenges are further exacerbated by experiences of racism and discrimination in job seeking and in workplaces which lack cultural competency.

Local Recommendation 4: Ballarat takes a whole-of-city approach to address employment issues, including educating businesses on recognising migrant needs, skills and capabilities, and the benefits of diversity in the workplace (see Case Study 5 and Innovation 2 below).

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[59] National Refugee-Led Action and Advisory Group & Refugee Council of Australia (2022); SCoA (2022).
[60] NRAAG & RCoA (2022).
[61] Ethnic Communities' Councils of Victoria (2021).

CASE STUDY 5
Multicultural Dialogue on Skilled Migration

Ballarat has strong mechanisms for continuous consultation with CALD communities. Multicultural Dialogues are held several times a year and draw on BRMC's membership of cultural and faith groups to provide a direct forum for multicultural leaders to effectively collaborate on solutions to settlement issues.

The most recent Dialogue was held by BRMC in partnership with the City of Ballarat in September 2022. Multicultural leaders connected with government and industry representatives on the topic of increasing Ballarat's skilled migration intake. This was timely given the recent Federal Government pledge for an additional 34,000 regional places to the skilled migration program. Over 50 stakeholders attended, including 20 multicultural representatives, regional employers and industry stakeholders, such as Commerce Ballarat, Ballarat Regional Tourism (BRT), Central Highlands Regional Partnership, Jobs Victoria, Federation University, Regional Opportunities Australia, and Runway HQ.

The Dialogue focused on challenges, innovative solutions and best practice models.

Barriers identified to successful migrant employment included lack of recognition of qualifications, visa issues, mentoring needs, cultural competency training and more accommodation options. Solutions included collaborative funding bids, advocacy to simplify visa policies, employing migrants already in Australia, sponsoring migration, flexible and peer mentoring, promoting and recognising migrant businesses, cultural tourism and incentivising businesses to diversify.

Many participants came away with ideas for collaborations and partnerships. An immediate outcome following the Dialogue was an offer of free membership to cultural and faith associations from the CEO of Commerce Ballarat, Jodie Gillett, providing direct access to business networking and information.

Fig. 9 Multicultural Dialogue

INNOVATION 2
Employment Diversity Initiatives

A number of current local employment innovations were showcased by stakeholders at the Multicultural Dialogue on Skilled Migration in September 2022. These included:

Ballarat Professional Mentoring Program

Host International and Regional Opportunities Australia are partnering with BRMC, City of Ballarat, Commerce Ballarat and Committee for Ballarat to match 15-25 skilled migrant jobseekers interested in working in Ballarat with professional mentors and employment coaches on a regular basis. The program will be evaluated by Federation University and BRT in 2023.

Diversify Project

BRT and BRMC are collaborating to connect multicultural jobseekers with hospitality and tourism employers facing labour shortages, with a focus on special support for youth. So far, 3 core industrial partners have been engaged (Sovereign Hill, the Mercure and the Provincial Hotel) and 4 jobseekers have been successfully placed, with an opportunity to place more during summers (seasonal work). In addition, 2 workshops on workplace rights have been held with CALD residents and international students and an informational video is in development.

HealthCare International Migrant Professionals

Over the past 15 years, HealthCare International (HCI) has been working to fill the gap in Australian health sector shortages through training and placing Malayalee and Keralite skilled healthcare professionals. HCI have successfully trained over 15,000 healthcare professionals, including enrolled and registered nurses in Australia, and have added 7,000 overseas registered nurses to Australia's healthcare system. In Ballarat, partnerships with Federation University and Ballarat Health Services have seen many nurses graduate and register. There is now a strong alumni practising in Ballarat healthcare.

MAXITrans Skilled Migration Sponsorship

One of Ballarat's largest employers, MAXITrans, is sponsoring 65 Filipino skilled migrants (primarily welders), to relocate to Ballarat and work for their company. These workers will be provided with training, initial support and permanent contracts.

MAPPING AND STRENGTHENING REGIONAL SETTLEMENT

A key aim of this Report is to connect insights about successful and sustainable regional settlement with what is happening on the ground in Ballarat. To assess Ballarat's current settlement capacity, in 2022 we designed new research that benchmarked against national best practice while being locally informed by both those at the grassroots level of service provision and those with lived experience of settlement. We gathered input through 3 research tools:

1 **Settlement Services Mapping Framework.** Our innovative Framework for the first time maps regional settlement provision against SCoA's National Settlement Outcomes Standards. Key settlement providers in Ballarat assessed their services against the 10 NSOS in order to determine strengths, needs and priorities. Insights were also included from multicultural leaders representing cultural and faith associations.

2 **Settling in Ballarat Survey.** Overseas born people living in Ballarat gave feedback on their lived experiences of settling in Ballarat, including accessing services. A total of 102 responses were received.

3 **Local Case Studies and Innovations.** We collected current local examples of best practice and innovation in Ballarat that showcase the importance of strategic partnerships and collaborations to ensuring successful settlement.

Together, these components provide a comprehensive understanding of what is needed to settle well in Ballarat.

Settlement Services Mapping Framework 2022

To assist with assessing, benchmarking and practising successful sustainable settlement, SCoA devised the National Settlement Outcomes Standards.[62] The NSOS are a best practice benchmarking tool, and consist of 10 areas with accompanying impact indicators:

1. Education and Training. Newly arrived people can readily access and participate in high quality education and training pathways.

2. Employment. Newly arrived people achieve positive employment outcomes, supported by services which are responsive, diverse, sustainable and effective.

3. Health and Wellbeing. Newly arrived people experience health and wellbeing, and are fully engaged in effective and responsive health and wellbeing programs and services, including primary prevention and early intervention programs.

4. Housing. Appropriate, affordable and long-term housing is available and accessible for newly arrived people, within reasonable proximity to social and community supports and employment opportunities.

5. Language Services. Translating and interpreting services, and a wide range of high quality translated and interpreted resources, are widely available and accessible for newly arrived people.

6. Transport. Affordable and accessible transport options are readily available to newly arrived people, to facilitate their social and economic participation, and their wellbeing.

7. Civic Participation. Newly arrived people are fully engaged and participating in the Australian community, and exercising their individual and collective rights and responsibilities under the law.

8. Family and Social Support. Newly arrived people are fully supported to establish and maintain safe, healthy, positive and meaningful family and social relationships throughout their settlement journey.

9. Justice. Newly arrived people have full access to the legal and justice systems, in order to ensure the realisation of their rights and responsibilities.

10. Finance. Newly arrived people are able to confidently navigate the financial landscape, and make good decisions that enable their financial and material wellbeing.

[62]SCoA, *National Settlement Outcomes* (2020).

Our **Settlement Services Mapping Framework** is an innovative tool that captures local settlement service provision according to the NSOS. The Framework is based on insights from key settlement service providers in Ballarat who benchmarked their settlement capacity, strengths and needs against the 10 NSOS. Providers who contributed included BCH, CMY, the City of Ballarat, BRMC, CAFS, BRASSN and BRSAC. Insights were also included from multicultural leaders representing cultural and faith associations.

Settlement Services Mapping Framework

Standard	Strengths	Future Priorities
🎓	• English language support from multiple settlement, community and volunteer providers • Training opportunities including employment and industry mentoring and networking, small business training, healthy living training and civic participation training • Specific support for young people through schools, services, tutoring, homework clubs and diversity youth groups • Support for women through business training and peer support (e.g. Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle)	• Extending English support across the wider region (e.g. Wimmera, Ararat, Horsham) • Creating more flexible English learning options for people who are working • Support to new arrivals for accessing services, training costs and access to technology • Building cultural competency of workplaces (e.g. understanding visa issues, overseas qualifications) • Specific supports for parents to access education and training (such as childcare support) and for disengaged youth, especially in the aftermath of COVID • Support for temporary visa holders facing restrictions on study
💼	• Collaborative approaches connecting settlement providers with government, mainstream job providers, industry and businesses to increase workforce diversity (e.g. Employment Action Group and Industry Networking Nights) • Employment support through the Community Employment Connector program, multicultural job club and community providers such as Ballarat Neighbourhood House • Specific employment support and mentoring for young people • Strong multicultural social enterprises and training opportunities	• Developing mutual workplace understanding by educating employers about CALD needs and capabilities and educating CALD employees about Australian workplaces • Affordable childcare options • Opportunities for new arrivals to gain work experience and use their existing qualifications • Specific support for men seeking employment • Addressing the precarity of social enterprises in terms of viability in the early years of the business, especially during COVID • Work rights for refugees and people seeking asylum

♥	- Coordinated health communication and services, especially during COVID - Tailored health support for new arrivals including targeted sessions and in language resources - Youth mental health support - Strong cultural competency in settlement staff - Aged care support - Sport and recreation services, especially for CALD youth	- More accessible health information, including a Welcome Program for new arrivals, and confidential sexual health support for young women - Cultural safety and affordability across services, including counselling provision, sport and recreation options, and translation options - Addressing increasing youth mental health issues and suicidality - Addressing isolation of people during COVID, especially ageing CALD residents - Trauma support for refugees and people seeking asylum
🏠	- Orientation and information support from settlement providers on the Australian housing and real estate market - Referrals and advocacy support from settlement providers to assist with CALD housing needs - Local policy recognition of CALD housing challenges through City of Ballarat Housing Strategy	- Increasing the number of rental properties - Strengthening advocacy against housing discrimination - Provision of emergency or temporary accommodation - Provision of affordable and well-located social housing
💬	- Free access to Translating and Interpreting Services - Use of bilingual workers and visual communication resources - Fostering workplace cultures inclusive of cultural and linguistic diversity - Digital literacy lessons - English language lessons and immersion pathways - Regular, tailored support through a partnership approach to service provision connecting settlement and mainstream providers - Local policy advocacy for more language support in the City of Ballarat Intercultural Plan 2022-26	- Access to IT equipment - More in language resources - Promotion of resources and services to ensure new arrivals are aware of support opportunities and do not 'fall through the cracks'

	- Strong volunteer base offering driving support - Driving training sponsorship from settlement providers on a needs basis - Information provision on Australian transport system - Transport support for social support clients - Local policy support for transport needs in the City of Ballarat Ageing Well Strategy and Intercultural Plan	- More affordable driving training programs - Strengthening advocacy to address multiple local public transport issues: limited routes, high cost, low frequency and discrimination
	- Orientation and information support on opportunities for social connection and participation, including the development of welcome packs for new arrivals - Voter education sessions, as well as councillor candidacy training for CALD community members interested in running for local government (commitments in the Intercultural Plan) - Citizenship support program run by settlement providers to assist with citizenship tests and applications - CALD capacity building through volunteering and multicultural community consultation and leadership opportunities - Youth participation and recognition through youth awards and Youth Ambassadors program - Inclusivity, anti-racism and cultural competence training - Events celebrating diversity	- Development of a formal Welcome to Australia program - Increasing diverse civic and political representation - Increasing new arrivals' understanding of local Ballarat history, society and community, including Indigenous culture and history
	- Domestic and family violence prevention sessions and programs, and family education programs - Inclusive family and youth services, including multicultural playgroups - Regular social programs and events, including for women - Provision of food aid for vulnerable families - Channels for social support through established cultural and faith associations and intercultural events	- Channels for women to participate in society - Whole-of-family social support and social support for isolated men - More affordable venues to host cultural and faith celebrations, and an up-to-date calendar of cultural events - Pathways for temporary visa holders to access Family and Social Support services

⚖️	- Orientation support on workplace rights and the justice system through settlement services - Legal support referrals and access to interpreters for legal advice through settlement services - Information sharing between providers, police and legal services - Volunteers providing legal support for young people	- Affordable and locally based immigration legal services - Provision of general legal information to CALD communities - Translation support for legal advice - Building cultural competence in youth justice sector
$	- Financial literacy support services for new arrivals - Strong relationships between settlement services and financial education providers	- More in language support to increase financial literacy - Tailored support to assist in developing long-term independence - Stronger engagement with the finance and corporate sectors on financial literacy and support, career pathways and multicultural competency (e.g. Commonwealth Bank, Bendigo Bank and Bank Australia programs) - Educating CALD communities and new arrivals about the importance of superannuation - Advocacy to address systemic discrimination

Key Priority

A crucial priority across stakeholder responses is the need for more funding that aligns with each of the Standards, to allow for tailored support and implementation.

For a comprehensive list of services, programs and providers, an extended version of the Framework can be accessed here and the BRMC website.

Our Framework clearly illustrates that Ballarat is performing strongly against each of the NSOS, offering multiple programs and services to new arrivals and CALD communities through both settlement and mainstream pathways. A key strength that emerges echoes our local case studies throughout the Report: collaborative efforts and coordinated partnerships to deliver services. This means that successful settlement is delivered on the ground in Ballarat through settlement providers working in collaboration with mainstream providers and businesses, as well as government bodies such as the City of Ballarat; and community organisations and volunteers who are willing to engage and support CALD communities. These community efforts include CALD communities themselves who provide extensive support through cultural and faith associations.

Our Framework identifies key strength areas as the coordinated approach to delivering Education and Training Support, Employment Support, and Health and Wellbeing Support. This includes a range of English language learning opportunities through services and volunteers, employment mentoring programs and an Employment Action Group that hosts Industry Networking Nights, as well as coordinated COVID support involving services and communities.

The emerging areas of priority from the Framework are Financial, Housing and Transport Support. These are areas in need of long-term sustained investment from all tiers of government to improve support. Across the board, structural gaps highlighted include a consistent lack of funding to deliver services in line with the NSOS areas and a lack of cultural competency and safety among mainstream service providers. The Framework also points to the need for more employment opportunities and mentoring programs for new arrivals, orientation and welcome support to inform them of services, locally based legal immigration advice, cultural competency training and specific supports for women, youth and people experiencing marginalisation.

The Settling in Ballarat survey was available to people living in Ballarat who were born overseas. The survey sought to understand the lived experience of moving to and living in Ballarat, including positive aspects and challenges, support received with settlement services and feedback on improving settlement support. A total of 102 responses were received.

Most survey respondents were fairly established, with 39% moving to Ballarat over 10 years ago, 19% over 5 years ago, 80% with citizenship or permanent residency, and 19% over the age of 65 (see Appendix for other visa types). Although this representation could be partly due to self-selection bias in terms of who responded, it also speaks to one of Ballarat's key strengths: a long history of migration and strongly established CALD communities represented by 30 cultural and faith associations. Survey responses showed the breadth of this diversity, with over 35 countries of origin represented. The greatest number of responses were from Indian residents, Ballarat's fastest growing country of origin.

Responses indicate that Ballarat is a secondary settlement destination, with many first moving to Australia and then later to Ballarat. This implies that many do not access settlement support in Ballarat when they first move to Australia. By the time they move to Ballarat, some may no longer meet settlement services eligibility criteria (limited to 5 years after arrival). This may partly explain why most respondents indicated that they did not access any settlement services in Ballarat (88%), except for the Adult Migrant English Program (7%) and Employment mentoring (2%) which do not have a time limit on eligibility.

Another feature of Ballarat's diverse migrant population reflected in responses is a high level of civic engagement. Respondents contributed to the community in many ways, including through involvement in cultural and faith organisations (36%), volunteering (32%) and as Intercultural Ambassadors (5%). This is consistent with the high levels of volunteering in migrant and refugee populations reported in SCoA and Volunteering Australia's 2019 Volunteering and Settlement in Australia Report[63]

Respondents indicated that the level of support they received on arrival to Ballarat was average, scoring exactly halfway on a sliding scale of zero to 100. When asked about specific areas of settlement based on the 10 NSOS, responses matched with the areas identified as strongest and weakest in the Settlement Mapping Framework:

- Strongest areas are Health and Wellbeing Support (54% good/excellent), Education and Training Support (53% good/excellent), Support to Participate in the Community and Civic Participation (51% good/excellent), and Employment Support (47.5%)
- Areas rated average are Family and Social Support (41% good/excellent), Language Support (36% good/excellent) and Justice Support (27% good/excellent)
- Areas in need of improvement are Financial Support (57% below average/low), Transport Support (42.5% below average/low) and Housing Support (41% below average/low) (See Appendix for further detail).

[63]Volunteering Australia, *Volunteering and Settlement in Australia: A Snapshot* (2019).

Settlement Experiences

Respondents were asked to share in their own words the strengths and challenges of settling in Ballarat, as well as suggestions for improvements. Some key themes are listed below.

Strengths

1. Friendly Community
The most common theme highlighted nice, wonderful, welcoming people; making friends; and an inclusive, helpful, caring, diverse and harmonious community.

> *Very welcoming inclusive community, everyone wants to help.*

2. Size and Location
Respondents liked Ballarat's small size, less traffic, easy access to services, quieter, slower pace and lifestyle, and city-country balance. They enjoyed the ease of travel, proximity to Melbourne and locations such as Geelong, and being close to nature.

> *A regional city with all the benefits of a larger city whilst still maintaining that rural lifestyle.*

3. Facilities and Infrastructure
Respondents valued the quality of facilities and infrastructure, including good schools and universities, hospitals, arts and culture, heritage, lakes and parks.

> *The city had everything to offer – good schools, entertainment, housing.*

Other positives mentioned were work opportunities, affordability (including housing) and safety.

Challenges

1. Isolation and Lack of Support, Weather, Cultural and Language Differences
The greatest challenges were feeling isolated and lonely, finding the local community difficult to connect with, being unaware of support available, and struggling with language and cultural differences. This was compounded by cold weather that some thought contributed to difficulties in forming connections.

> *Not knowing anyone. Separation from family, no friends.*
>
> *Finding services that are available to newcomers. Felt somewhat isolated.*

2. Employment, Housing and Transport
Respondents faced challenges around accessing employment (without networks, and that matched their skillset), the frequency and cost of public transport, and the availability and affordability of housing, especially getting accepted for rental properties.

> *Finding work, finding place to rent and finding a job matching skill set.*

3. Discrimination and Lack of Diversity
Respondents discussed the lack of diversity in Ballarat such as availability of cultural foods, although some said this was improving. Some shared facing discrimination and a lack of acceptance due to being different.

> *Not many Arabs live here, no access to Middle Eastern food/grocery/restaurants. I still get the looks from people because I wear the head scarf, doesn't feel nice all the time.*

Suggestions for Improvement

1.Support and Connection for New Arrivals
Respondents suggested that there should be more support for new arrivals and more accessible promotion of existing support services. This included connecting people with multicultural groups and running more multicultural events.

> *Please give a brochure pack to the family who move to Ballarat which includes all the available services*
>
> *An induction-like seminar on what it's like living in Ballarat*

2. Job Opportunities
Respondents indicated that finding a job was difficult and wanted more job opportunities, including support such as training and work placements.

> *More employment opportunities and better accommodation could have made the life more easier.*

3. Connecting with Australians
In addition to opportunities to meet other CALD residents, respondents wanted more opportunities to meet established Australian residents and form social connections. This was important for them to integrate but also to promote more understanding of cultural differences in mainstream society.

> *If people would be a bit more engaging to newcomers, our neighbour did not talk to us for almost a year.*

4. Affordability
Affordability of childcare, housing and transport were barriers to settling well.

In summary, survey responses show that the benefits of settlement in Ballarat for CALD communities include the close-knit friendly community and the compact size and slower pace, with the amenities of a big city, and within reach of many attractions. Challenges are the isolation people face upon settling, difficulties of finding employment, affordable housing and transport, and barriers with discrimination and lack of diversity. Many would like more accessible support services, more connections with both CALD communities and the wider community, and more acknowledgment of diversity. These findings are consistent with existing research on the lived experiences of migrants in Ballarat.[64]

[64]T. Patil et al., *Exploring the Lived Experiences of Migrants in Regional Victoria, Australia* (2019).

Local Case Studies and Innovations

"...social capital initiatives are a whole-of-community exercise. The welcome extended to entrants in regional centres and the level of engagement by members of the established community enhances opportunities for social cohesion, and a feeling of belonging, to flourish."[65]

In Ballarat we are actively ensuring a coordinated, whole-of-city approach to settlement through fostering successful local partnerships and collaborations. These are showcased in our local case studies and innovations featured throughout the Report.

Case Studies

1. Collaborative Leadership on Diversity

Ballarat takes a collective approach to leading in diversity, including policy leadership from the City of Ballarat as an Intercultural City, Welcoming City and Refugee Welcome Zone, as well as strategic partnerships and collaborations between the Council, settlement organisations, community and volunteer groups, multicultural leaders and multicultural businesses.

2. Combating Racism in Regional Victoria

Ballarat is an anti-racism champion, hosting anti-racism workshops with service providers and the general public as well as intercultural music workshops with primary school children to develop skills in recognising and responding to racism and discrimination.

3. Belonging and Participation of Afghan and Hazara Residents

Local volunteers, community organisations, schools and sports organisations have supported Afghan and Hazara refugees over the past 10 years, and these refugees are now supporting their own communities through various community initiatives including establishing the Ballarat Afghan Action Group that provides aid to people in need under the Taliban in Afghanistan.

4. COVID Coordination

Ballarat has demonstrated its capacity to rapidly mobilise partnerships and networks during the pandemic through collaborations between BRMC, BCH, WHG and multicultural leaders to deliver in-language COVID information, vaccinations and food relief.

5. Multicultural Dialogues

Ballarat has strong consultative mechanisms with multicultural communities and leaders to ensure that regional settlement is informed by people with lived experience. Multicultural dialogues provide forums to address settlement challenges, with the most recent dialogue bringing together businesses, industry leaders and multicultural leaders to build local capacity to increase the skilled migration intake.

Innovations

1. Ballarat Welcome Project

This BRMC initiative funded by the Victorian Government provides Welcome Tours and Welcome Morning Teas to newcomers to Ballarat, connecting them with essential settlement and mainstream services and developing cultural competency of participating services.

2. Employment Diversity Initiatives

Four local initiatives were showcased at a recent Multicultural Dialogue that promote diversity in employment through professional mentoring of refugees (Ballarat Professional Mentoring Program), job placements for CALD jobseekers in hospitality and tourism (Diversify Project), training and placement of migrant healthcare professionals (HealthCare International), and sponsorship of skilled migration (MAXITrans).

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[65]C. Shepley, *Research into the Settlement Experience of Humanitarian Entrants in Regional Australia*, 2006-07 (2007).

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT

Continuous engagement, collaboration and evaluation around settlement services and user experiences is crucial to ensure successful and sustainable settlement. Ballarat has strong infrastructure, networks and processes that ensure constant and quality communication around settlement, enabling challenges to be met and improvements made. We have drawn on the cumulative insights of these networks and gained key input from the Settlement Services Mapping Framework and Settling in Ballarat Survey, as well as local case studies and innovations featured.

Linking our findings with insights about regional settlement challenges and opportunities, we clearly see that Ballarat has many of the key strengths identified for successful regional settlement. These include a variety of settlement services and coordinated infrastructure that are appropriate and tailored to local CALD communities, a strong economy with capacity for the integration of migrants, a local community willing to engage and welcome newcomers, and strong and supportive established and emerging CALD communities. The NSOS areas particularly benefiting from collective impact and strategic partnerships are Education and Training, Employment, Health and Wellbeing and Civic Participation.

Ballarat also faces many of the challenges common to regional areas, such as severe funding constraints, housing shortages and barriers to employment opportunities. The NSOS areas emerging as future priorities are Housing, Transport and Financial Support, which require sustained advocacy and investment.

The case studies featured throughout the report showcase innovative ways in which Ballarat is responding to these challenges through viewing diversity as a strength and an advantage. The examples of leadership in the intercultural space, community support for and by refugees, coordinated services through COVID, multicultural community dialogues, anti-racism training, intercultural music workshops, welcoming activities and employment diversity initiatives all demonstrate how local stakeholders work together alongside CALD residents to promote diversity and inclusion, support one another, provide solutions to challenges and deliver strong sustainable settlement services.

OUR COMMITMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

Current migration policy trends are creating a favourable climate for regional settlement. Our Report paints a picture of an active and diverse Ballarat community with high civic engagement, strong coordinated settlement services and infrastructure, innovative approaches to addressing challenges and a commitment to ongoing diversity and inclusion.

Ballarat is ideally placed to be a leading regional settlement city. We are ready to engage with Federal and State Governments to increase primary settlement through Skilled, Humanitarian and special targeted settlement initiatives. The collective commitment to our intercultural economy and community position us well to step up in 2023 and beyond.

Our Commitments

Into the future, the EVOLVE Partnership makes the following collective commitments to promote diversity and ensure continued strong sustainable settlement:

Promoting Diversity, Interculturalism and Inclusion. We will promote a welcoming and inclusive city that sees diversity as an advantage, collaborate to implement the City of Ballarat's Intercultural Plan 2022-26, and work with service providers, businesses and local community members to value diversity.

Coordinated Services and Infrastructure. We will keep our strong coordinated services and infrastructures vibrant through regular committees, meetings, partnerships and events, such as BRSAC, BRASSN, PREP and the COVID Coordination Network.

Collaboration with CALD Communities. We will ensure that services and policies are informed by lived experience through co-design with the communities they impact through channels such as Multicultural Dialogues, PREP, Intercultural Advisory Committee and Ambassadors, and engagement with established cultural and faith associations.

Ongoing Research and Policy Advocacy. We commit to consistent and continuous research on regional settlement to build and maintain a robust evidence base, track opportunities and challenges, and advocate for solutions, including through the creation of a Regional Settlement Research Network bringing together experts to share information and best practice.

Addressing Known Gaps and Challenges. We will work collaboratively to proactively and innovatively address known gaps and challenges, such as the need for intersectional data, affordable housing, transport and financial support identified in this Report.

NEXT STEPS

Successfully delivering upon our commitments and our readiness requires investment and support from all tiers of government to make sure settlement is undertaken sustainably. This includes, but is not limited to, investment in regional development and infrastructure such as housing, transport and employment opportunities, as well as settlement services and funding.

With the right support to ensure sustainable settlement, we are ready to increase our regional intakes through the following streams:

Skilled Migration. We are already working collaboratively across Ballarat to ensure a strategic and sustainable approach to increasing our skilled migration intake that includes partnerships with settlement providers, local government, businesses, and industry and multicultural leaders.

Humanitarian Entrants. We have existing infrastructure and settlement services delivering humanitarian support, as well as strong community connectedness and networks including established and emerging CALD communities.

Community-Based Settlement Models. Our strong community, volunteer and CALD networks have the capacity to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for new arrivals through models such as the Community Support Program and the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot.

We look forward to working in partnership with all tiers of government to provide and increase successful and sustainable settlement in Ballarat into the future.

GLOSSARY

BAAG	Ballarat Afghan Action Group
BCH	Ballarat Community Health
BHS	Ballarat Health Services
BRASSN	Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network
BRMC	Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
BRSAC	Ballarat Regional Settlement Advocacy Committee
BRT	Ballarat Regional Tourism
CAFS	Child and Family Services
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CMY	Centre for Multicultural Youth
DHA	Department of Home Affairs, Australian Government
ECCV	Ethnic Communities' Councils of Victoria
EVOLVE Partnership	Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, City of Ballarat, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Ballarat Community Health and Wimmera Development Association
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
HCI	HealthCare International
LOTE	Language other than English
NSOS	National Settlement Outcomes Standards
PREP	Multicultural Pandemic Response and Emergency Preparedness Group
SCoA	Settlement Council of Australia
SETS	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support
SETSCoP	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Community of Practice
SHEV	Safe Haven Enterprise Visa
SSI	Settlement Services International
SSP	Settlement Services Provider
TSS	Temporary Skills Shortage Visa
WDA	Wimmera Development Association
WHG	Women's Health Grampians

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APPENDIX

City of Ballarat Policy Initiatives

In addition to the Intercultural Plan 2022-26 and the suite of intersectional plans united under the Inclusion Framework (Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Plan, Ageing Well Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan), the City of Ballarat has embedded cultural responsiveness across the breadth of its strategic commitments:

- The Circular Ballarat Framework is driving the city's long-term vision for a circular economy delivering economic prosperity, social wellbeing and environmental health.
- The Active Ballarat Strategy commits to diverse wide-reaching communications, intercultural relationships with sports associations and developing a diversity charter.
- The Ballarat Libraries and Learning Strategy encourages diversity and cross-cultural understanding, building partnerships with aligned service and cultural organisations, and delivering culturally based programs.
- The Municipal Early Years Plan 2022–26 focuses on celebrating children's diverse cultures and identities and strengthening cultural competence and cultural safety across children's services.
- The Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–31 integrates culturally responsive health and social services; a commitment to working with local employers to place migrants in meaningful employment and supporting entrepreneurship opportunities.

Australia's 2021 Demographic Profile

The 2021 Census revealed that nearly half of all Australians are first or second-generation migrants, with 28% of the population born overseas and 48% having at least one parent born overseas.

The majority of Australia's overseas born population reside in Melbourne. Four of the 10 most multicultural suburbs are located in Melbourne's west.

The most common countries of birth outside of Australia were Malaysia, Italy, South Africa, Vietnam, Philippines, China (excludes Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), New Zealand, India and England. India has surpassed China and New Zealand to become the third-largest country of birth among Australian residents. An additional 217,963 Indian-born people became residents between 2016-2021. Nepal followed with an additional 67,752 people. This means Australia's Nepali-born population has more than doubled since 2016, increasing by 124%.

The number of people who used a language other than English at home increased by nearly 800,000, rising to over 5.5 million people between 2016-2021. The top 3 non-English languages spoken at home were Mandarin, Arabic and Vietnamese. Punjabi is the fastest growing language, with an increase of over 80% from 2016 to 239,000 speakers.

Migration Program Breakdown

The outcome of Australia's permanent Migration Program for 2020-21 was 160,052 places,[66] with 79,620 places in the skilled stream, 77,372 places in the family stream, 54 places in the special eligibility stream, and 3,006 places in the child stream.

The largest source countries in 2020-21 were China (22,207 places), India (21,791), United Kingdom (12,703), Philippines (11,058), Vietnam (8,120), USA (5,048), Nepal (4,714), Hong Kong (4,313), Pakistan (4,121) and Thailand (4,002).

In 2020-21, the skilled stream focused on visa categories which will help Australia's economy rebound from COVID, with priority given to visa cohorts that drive economic growth, job creation and investment into Australia. The 3 priority categories were Business Innovation and Investment

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[66]DHA, *2020-21 Migration Program Report Program* (2021).

Program, Global Talent Program, and Employer Sponsored Program. Employer Sponsored visas comprised 29.5% of the skilled stream outcome in 2020-21.

The top occupation group was Registered Nurses at 3,670 of skilled migrant places (1,353 places for regional areas). For regional areas, this was followed by Accountants, Software and Applications Programmers, Industrial, Mechanical and Production Engineers, and Cooks. Under the Employer Sponsored category, the most sought-after occupation was Software and Applications Programmers followed by Registered Nurses.

The Regional category had an outcome of 13,585 places (17% of the skilled stream). Of this, 10,675 places were delivered in Skilled Work Regional and 2,910 places in Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional. Where applicants have specified where they intended to reside, Victoria came second to NSW with 40,114 places, 1,439 of which were under the regional category.[67]

Humanitarian Program Breakdown

Largely as a result of COVID, Australia's humanitarian intake numbers over the last 2 to 3 years are the lowest we have seen in almost 50 years. Australia received 13,171 humanitarian entrants between 2019-20, with the 3 largest countries being Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo and Myanmar.[68] A total of 5,947 humanitarian visas were issued in 2020-21.

As at 30 June 2022,[69] there were approximately 9,000 offshore humanitarian visa holders who were yet to travel to Australia. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is working on moving these visa holders to Australia as efficiently as possible, taking account of the capacity of settlement service providers.

The Australian Government made a 2022 election commitment to increase Australia's annual humanitarian intake to 27,000 spaces per year.

To date, 13,750 places have been allocated under the Humanitarian Program for 2022-23, with an additional 16,500[70] places for Afghan nationals to be delivered over 4 years (4,125 per year).

The Humanitarian Program has potential to be expanded as a result of the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot,[71] enabling Australians to directly support refugees to settle in Australia, supporting 1,500 humanitarian entrants to participate over 4 years; and the Community Support Program,[72] for people and businesses in Australia to support a person in humanitarian need to come to Australia and assist them in their settlement journey (if they meet specific criteria), supporting a progressive increase to 5,000 places per year.

The Government has also committed to improving settlement service funding, tailoring employment programs as essential settlement services, ensuring services for refugees are culturally responsive and universally accessible, and supporting the involvement of community groups in providing settlement services. Local governments and local communities will play a greater role in the settlement of humanitarian entrants in regional locations.

Regional Visa Incentives

The Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) visa[73] allows workers who hold an eligible visa and meet income requirements to live and work in Australia permanently. Additional points are available under the Skilled Migration Points Test for skilled migrants nominating to live and work in regional Australia and for international students graduating from regional universities.[74]

The Safe Haven Enterprise Visa offers protection to humanitarian entrants if they go to a regional area, although there have been some uncertainties and inconsistencies in delivery.

The Victorian Skilled Migration Program for 2022-23 is open to applicants living in Victoria and overseas, providing skilled

[67] DHA, *2020-21 Migration Program Report* (2021).
[68] SCoA, 'Frequently Asked Questions', (2022)
[69] DHA, *Australia's Offshore Program* (2021)
[70] DHA, 'About the Refugee and Humanitarian Program' (2022).
[71] DHA, 'The Community Refugee Integration and Sponsorship Pilot' (2022).
[72] DHA, 'Community Support Program' (2022).
[73] DHA, 'Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) Visa' (2022).
[74] DHA, 'Regional Migration' (2022).

migrants with a pathway to permanent residency. The program provides 2 visa pathways, both of which include eligibility requirements:

- Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190) - a permanent visa for skilled migrants to live and work anywhere in Victoria
- Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491) - for skilled migrants to live and work in regional Victoria and provides a pathway to permanent residency. The Victorian government is prioritising health occupations for subclass 491 visa nominations.

Changes to Migration Trends Resulting from the 2022 Job and Skills Summit

The 2022 Job and Skills Summit[75] brought together unions, employers, civil society and governments to address Australia's economic challenges, with a focus on skilled migration to address skill shortages. Summit outcomes included:

- An increase to the annual permanent immigration intake from 160,000 to 195,000 with a planned move to permanency and citizenship for temporary visa holders in Australia
- Increase in regional migration and permanent residency pathways from 9,000 to 34,000, and state and territory sponsored visas from 11,000 to 31,000. It is also likely that permanent pathways will become available for all Temporary Skills Shortage Visa (TSS) (subclass 482) holders
- Continued temporary relaxation of working hours for student visa holders until June 2023, with international students able to work before their course of study commences, and no longer limited to 40 hours a fortnight
- International students to be granted longer Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visas to strengthen access to skilled labour. Post-study work rights in areas of skill shortages will be increased based on qualification level with up to 6 years for select PhDs

- Faster visa processing with an extra $36.1 million to increase staff capacity to enable faster processing times and a clearance of the backlog of applications.

Settling in Ballarat Survey Information

The survey was distributed via email, text message, social media and WhatsApp to Ballarat's overseas born residents. Key distribution channels were BRMC's membership of 30 cultural and faith associations, Settlement Engagement and Transition Support, and Humanitarian Settlement Program clients. Hard copies were available at the Ballarat Welcome Centre, distributed at BRMC programs and reply-paid posted to BRMC's Social Support clients (CALD residents over 65). The survey was anonymous and confidential and open from 14 September to 2 October 2022. People could skip any questions they did not wish to answer. Of the 102 respondents:

- 41% moved to Australia over 10 years ago, 19% over 5 years ago, 15% over 20 years ago, 9% 3-4 years ago, 3% 2-3 years ago, and 6% less than 2 years ago[76]
- 22% moved to Ballarat over 10 years ago, 19% over 5 years ago, 17% over 20 years ago (and in this group up to 70 years ago), 12% 3-4 years ago, 9% 2-3 years ago, 9% 12-24 months ago, and 10% less than 12 months ago
- 62% were Australian citizens, 18% permanent residents, 5% on a skilled visa, 5% on a student visa, 4% on a bridging visa, 2% on a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa, 2% on Temporary (Graduate and Skilled) Visas and 1% on a Refugee or Humanitarian Visa
- 19% were over the age of 65 years old
- 33% were originally from India, 6% from the Philippines, 4% each from Germany, Iran, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom, 3% each from Croatia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan and Poland, 2% each from Hungary, Mauritius, South Sudan, and Vietnam, and 1% each from Afghanistan, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Fiji Islands, Kuwait, Hungary, Indonesia,

[75]Australian Government, Jobs + Skills Summit (2022)
[76]Unfortunately, due to a survey error, the first 12 respondents were unable to select an answer to this question.

Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, Thailand and the United States of America
- A question about ethnic background displayed some variation within nationalities in terms of linguistic, cultural and religious affiliation and identities
- 7% had accessed the Adult Migrant English Program (and a further 1% other English Language Support), and 2% the City of Ballarat Intercultural Employment Pathways Program. 88% said they had not accessed settlement services in Ballarat.

Respondents were asked to rate the level of support they received when they moved to Ballarat in 10 areas (based on the NSOS). Their top-rated responses are in orange and second top rated in blue.

Responses show that:
- Strongest areas are Health and Wellbeing Support (54% good/excellent), Education and Training Support (53% good/excellent), Support to Participate in the Community/Civic Participation (51% good/excellent) and Employment Support (47.5% good/excellent)
- Average areas are Family and Social Support (41% good/excellent), Language Support (36% good/excellent) and Justice Support (27% good/excellent)
- Weakest areas are Financial Support (57% below average/low), Transport Support (42.5% below average/low), and Housing Support (41%). Note that this could reflect equating financial support with financial contribution due to the question wording.

TABLE: SETTLEMENT SUPPORT AREAS IN BALLARAT

	LOW (WEAK)	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	GOOD	HIGH (EXCELLENT)
Education and Training Support	26%	4%	18%	35%	18%
Employment Support	29%	9%	15%	27.5%	20%
Health and Wellbeing Support	20%	5%	22%	34%	20%
Transport Support	27.5%	15%	22.5%	25%	10%
Housing Support	32%	9%	35%	15%	9%
Language Support (e.g. translation & interpreting services	26%	9%	30%	25%	11%
Family and Social Support	20.5%	11.5%	27%	27%	14%
Financial Support (help and support with money)	44%	13%	14%	20%	9%
Justice Support (help and information about the law)	28%	14%	30%	18%	9%
Support to Participate in the Ballarat Community	16%	7%	26%	32%	19%

Key: Orange = Highest ranking response per area, Blue = second highest ranking response per area