



Multicultural Dialogue #3 Celebrations and Events Snapshot Summary

19 December 2022, Ballarat Welcome Centre

Purpose

The Celebrations and Events Dialogue was the third forum in the Multicultural Dialogue Series, an initiative hosted by Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council. Multicultural Dialogues provide a forum to work with, involve and consult culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse (CALD) communities in the development of BRMC's strategic priorities. Priority areas identified in the Multicultural Dialogues Series will inform BRMC's upcoming Strategic Plan 2023-30, which continues on from the current BRMC Strategic Roadmap 2021-23.

The aim of the Celebrations and Events Dialogue was to bring together multicultural leaders with government, community, tertiary and settlement sector representatives to discuss how to ensure that celebrations and events are inclusive and sustainable in Ballarat. Multicultural communities seek to collaboratively develop capacity to host more events to showcase culture and traditions, that are inclusive and welcoming to the general public and all cultures and faiths. Over 60 key stakeholders attended including the Mayor of the City of Ballarat Councillor Des Hudson, BRMC members from cultural and faith associations, all tiers of government including the City of Ballarat and Victorian Multicultural Commission, and community, tertiary and settlement sector representatives.

The dialogue was led by BRMC Chair Joy Juma along with BRMC board members Betty Mathew (Women's Officer) and Meeta Narsi (Secretary) who asked the audience for their suggestions in relation to improving the inclusivity and sustainability of celebrations and events in Ballarat. In particular, BRMC members representing cultural and faith associations were asked to identify priorities from the perspective of the needs of their communities. This summary snapshot provides an overview of the priority areas, suggested actions, and opportunities that arose from the dialogue.

Priority Areas

The dialogue was facilitated around key priority areas previously identified by BRMC members at the BRMC 2021 Strategic Planning Day (see [Multicultural Dialogue #1 Summary](#)):

- **Financial Sustainability.** CALD communities need support to make events sustainable, such as event partnership, sponsorship and funding, assistance with grant applications, event and public liability insurance, and technical and administrative support.

- **Affordable Venues.** A key need is for affordable venues with commercial kitchen access for cultural events, large festivals (of up to 400 people) and smaller activities.
- **Event Calendar.** Creation of a regularly updated shared online calendar of community programs and events would enable wide promotion of cultural celebrations and the expansion of participation from the general public and many cultural groups.
- **Collaborative Events.** Collaborating to support and promote events is important, especially across interests and causes that involve the whole community such as climate change, sport, arts, youth, and faith.
- **Key Annual Intercultural Event.** CALD communities want to build their own capacity to run and grow an annual cultural event that will promote Ballarat as the first Intercultural City in Australia, drawing on intercultural and cross-cultural exchange.

Suggestions for Inclusive and Sustainable Celebrations

There was acknowledgement and appreciation throughout the discussion that Ballarat is on the front foot with strong support available for collaborative initiatives for inclusive events from many partners including the City of Ballarat, Victoria Police and private organisations. An important part of attracting this support has been the proactive efforts from multicultural communities in identifying their own needs and asking for assistance.

Yet there is still more work to be done to improve the sustainability of celebrations and events, as well as their ability to attract a wider audience. Suggestions from the discussion included:

- **Promoting Intercultural Understanding.** There is a need for more events that showcase not only one but many diverse cultures at once, including Indigenous Australian cultures. This includes both cultural traditions and performance (e.g. dance, music) as well as everyday elements of cultures such as attitudes and values. This will assist the general community to gain an understanding of the range and breadth of cultures existing alongside mainstream Anglo-Australian culture, including points of commonality and difference.
- **Encouraging Private Sponsorship.** While some large cultural celebrations such as Diwali and InterKultura have successfully attracted private sector investment and sponsorship, this is not the norm. Often multicultural businesses themselves engage disproportionately in contributing resources. More could be done to engage mainstream private sector resourcing for diverse celebrations. This would be mutually beneficial as it allows businesses to raise their own profile and become more inclusive.
- **Visible Diversity.** The visibility of diverse cultural celebrations around the city could be elevated to the level of mainstream and established celebrations such as Christmas and the Begonia Festival, through decorations and information boards etc.
- **Grant Support.** Cultural and faith associations struggle with the time and expertise needed to find, apply for and acquit appropriate grants. It was suggested that BRMC could provide more information and support about grants processes.
- **Event Support.** Even when cultural and faith associations are successful in attracting grant or sponsorship support, they are often stretched to deliver events. This is because cultural and faith associations do not charge fees, and therefore have very limited channels for raising extra revenue. Additionally, venues are expensive and it is difficult to find suitable venues for large events (with a commercial kitchen etc). Events tend to be large in scale and successful delivery relies on extensive volunteer support. More understanding of these challenges and offers of event support (e.g. community

or corporate volunteers, venues, in kind support) would help to alleviate some of these pressures.

- **Public Transport and Accessibility.** It is difficult for guests to access events due to the need for better public transport routes and more parking facilities. This can exclude community members from attending, especially those who are more vulnerable.
- **Thinking Big to Attract Visitors and Migration.** In terms of framing events, there is a need to look outside Ballarat and think about how to attract people in from the region and beyond. This includes both tourism and future migration opportunities. If Ballarat is known as a diverse city it may become more attractive to migrants as a settlement destination. Thinking big entails reflecting on the value and uniqueness of what is offered on the local level and how this might appeal at a broader scale.

Future Intercultural Event Ideas

Dialogue participants were asked what intercultural events were a priority to them and their vision for such events. Existing examples were provided to assist brainstorming such as InterKultura Soccer Tournament, Harmony Festival, Intercultural Concert at Wendouree Performing Arts, Rock the Block Youth Festival, PakoFest (Geelong), and the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Intercultural Gala. Suggestions for future events included:

- **National Intercultural Women's Festival.** Ballarat could be the first city in Australia to host a festival to showcase the activities, traditions, connections and achievements of women from diverse backgrounds. These achievements are numerous and often go unrecognised.
- **Inclusive Events for Ageing Multicultural Community Members.** There is a tendency for older members of multicultural communities to miss out on events, due to factors such as caring responsibilities, isolation and accessibility. Events should be adapted to be inclusive of ageing members of multicultural communities and to recognise their contributions to the community.
- **Annual Graduate Conference.** There are many international and diverse graduates seeking connections and opportunities after study. An annual conference or career expo for university graduates in Ballarat could focus on networking and shaping the future of the next generation, helping them to stay in the region rather than moving to bigger cities for opportunities.

Outcome: Transport Advocacy

City of Ballarat Mayor Des Hudson acknowledged issues with transport accessibility in Ballarat, and stated that it was an ongoing priority to lobby the Department of Transport for more transport services, e.g. bus routes, that are frequent and efficient.

Upcoming Opportunity: City of Ballarat Intercultural Garden Consultation

City of Ballarat Intercultural Partnerships Officer John Drennan shared that plans are underway for the development of an Intercultural Garden in Ballarat. The Intercultural Garden will be a public outdoor space at the corner of Sturt and Pleasant Streets equipped with a picnic and BBQ area and natural amphitheatre that can be used to host cultural celebrations. Community consultations will take place in February 2023 and multicultural communities are invited to participate to share their thoughts and suggestions. Please keep an eye on the City of Ballarat MySay website for the opportunity to contribute.