



Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC) Annual Report

January 2024 to June 2025



Figure 1: Henna painting at St Kilda library as part of Cultural Diversity week.



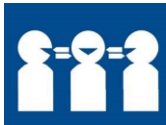
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Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	4
About the Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC)	5
Message from the Chair (James Seow)	6
Our multicultural community	7
Policy context	8
MAC membership 2024/2025	9
Membership	10
Retiring members	10
MAC Action Plan	11
Welcoming Cities Standards	12
Consultation specific to Council business	13
Welcoming Cities Subcommittee	14
Anti-racism Subcommittee	15
MAC activities, capacity building and engagement	15
Multicultural and events	18
Cultural Diversity Week 2024	19
Cultural Diversity Week 2025	20
Refugee Week 2024	22
Refugee Week 2025	23
Acknowledgement	23

About the Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC)

The MAC was appointed by the City of Port Phillip Council in 2019 to assist Council by providing advice and feedback on all issues and opportunities that affect all multicultural communities in the City of Port Phillip.



Figure 3: Members of the City of Port Phillip's Multicultural Advisory Committee as of March 2025. Top left to right: Joshua Goodman, Vasileios Tsialtas, Alex Kats, H el ene Kammoun (Deputy Chair). Bottom left to right: Alba Chliakhtine, James Seow (Chair), Tina Keen, Cr Libby Buckingham.

It also brings matters of concern within the community to the attention of the Council. This includes:

- To represent and advocate on behalf multicultural communities in City of Port Phillip.
- To advise Council on its policies, plans and services that impact our multicultural communities.
- To support the value of Council's membership to The Welcoming Cities Standard - the national standard for cultural diversity, and inclusion policy and practice in Local Government.
- To consider and provide advice to Council on key government initiatives, issues, programs and reviews.

- To assist Council to promote and celebrate the benefits of cultural diversity, social cohesion and inclusion of all residents within City of Port Phillip and beyond.
- To advise Council on its communication, engagement and consultation with multicultural communities.
- To assist Council to celebrate multiculturalism, including Harmony Week, and formally observe the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Extension of Committee term to June 2025

This report includes the period January 2024 to June 2025. In 2024, MAC met monthly from March to August, pausing meetings during the Election Period (caretaker) from 17 September until 26 October 2024. In 2025, MAC met bi-monthly from February to June.

At Council meeting on 21 August 2024, a Notice of Motion (NoM) was passed to extend the terms of the Older Persons Advisory Committee (OPAC), LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and MAC to June 2025. Therefore, this report reflects activities for 2024 and the period of extension, until 30 June 2025.

Message from the Chair (James Seow)



Figure 4: MAC chairperson, James Seow.

As I reflect on the insights, skills and lived experience contributed by MAC members to help Council build a more diverse, inclusive and vibrant city, I feel pride in our collective

accomplishments. This report celebrates the committee's efforts to strengthen multiculturalism, social cohesion and intercultural understanding in the last one and a half years.

From leading an internal study of Welcoming Cities standard to diagnosing local systemic causes of racial prejudice and antisemitism, MAC was diligent in ensuring that the needs and concerns of multicultural communities were heard and acknowledged in local government. Against a backdrop of geopolitical conflict and uncertainty, MAC emphasised the importance of leveraging the strengths and cultural assets of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and international students for the Port Phillip community to be resilient and to flourish.

We do not live as individuals; we live in relation to others, as parts of a larger system. Honouring the right of equal opportunity, empowering disadvantaged groups with skills and resources to uplift themselves, understanding power and privilege, and advocating for a more just and equitable society are causes MAC holds very close to the heart. These were expressed in the advice and feedback the committee offered to Council in many consultations and reviews, one being the Plan for Port Phillip 2025-35.

Understanding the need for a reflexive practice, MAC engaged in learning opportunities to better understand wellbeing challenges in multicultural communities through presentations, forums and workshops. These helped members to clarify knowledge and service gaps, and accordingly fine-tune MAC's Action Plans.

As you read the report, I hope you are inspired to participate more actively in civic engagement to help your community, particularly those experiencing intersectionality and discrimination, find opportunities for meaningful relationships, personal agency, and fulfilment.

I want to thank all committee members, Councillors, Council staff, and program partners for their dedication and hard work. We could do what we did only because of everyone's support and trust. The pride in our achievements is shared by us all.

Our multicultural community

The 2021 Census records that 33.1 per cent of Port Phillip's residents were born outside of Australia and 21 per cent speak a language other than English at home (place of usual residence). Further characteristics of Port Phillip's multicultural community include:

- The City of Port Phillip is home to people from 164 different birthplaces speaking 126 different languages and dialects.

- The top five languages spoken at home other than English are Greek, Mandarin, Spanish, Italian and Russian.
- The largest non-English country of birth is India with 2.1 per cent (or 2,131 people) which is similar to 2016.
- More than 35,000 people born overseas are now living in our municipality.
- Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people residing in Port Phillip who were born overseas increased by 11.9 per cent. The largest proportion were aged between 25- and 39-years old arriving on skilled and family stream visas.
- People aged 60 years and older make up 18 per cent of the resident population of City of Port Phillip. 44 per cent of residents aged 60 years and older were born overseas. Excluding English, the most common languages spoken at home were Greek, Russian, Italian and Polish.
- The City of Glen Eira is home to one of the largest Jewish communities in Victoria with 25,585 people. The City of Stonnington is next with 4,523 people, followed by Port Phillip (3,408). A large percentage of the community infrastructure is in Port Phillip.
- Census data shows that City of Port Phillip is trending towards becoming more culturally diverse over the past two Census periods, 26.9 percent in 2006 and now 33.1 percent born overseas. This trend is predicted to continue.

Policy context

MAC plays an important role in ensuring equity is upheld and that Council is meeting the diverse needs of our community in its policy and practice. Additionally, the work of the Committee is in line with best practice in terms of international, National, State and Local policies.

International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), UNESCO • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), United Nations
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Human Rights Commission Act (1986), Parliament of Australia (<i>Makes discrimination for reason of race unlawful</i>) • Racial Discrimination Act (1975), Parliament of Australia (<i>Enshrines equity in law, regardless of race, national or ethnic background</i>) • The People of Australia – Australia’s Multicultural Policy (2013), Commonwealth of Australia (Commits the Australian government to respond to the needs of CALD communities). • Multicultural Access and Equity Policy (2015), Commonwealth of Australia (<i>Guides equitable access to government services</i>) • National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy (2012), Australian Human Rights Commission (<i>Aims to increase awareness and improve anti-racism practices</i>) • Services for All: Promoting Access and Equity in Local Government (undated), Australian Local Government Association (<i>Access and equity practice resource for local governments</i>)

State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural Victoria Act (2011), Parliament of Victoria (<i>A framework of cultural diversity principles</i>) • Victorian Charter of Rights and Responsibilities (2006), Parliament of Victoria (<i>Provides a mechanism to measure actions and decisions made by an organisation</i>) • Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (2001), Parliament of Victoria (<i>Makes it illegal to vilify anyone on the grounds of race or religion</i>) • Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (2010) (<i>Holistically protects people’s rights to equal opportunities</i>) • Victoria’s Advantage: Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Policy (<i>A whole of government commitment to culturally diverse communities with details on objectives and commitments</i>)
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAV Statement of Commitment to Cultural Diversity (2012), Municipal Association Victoria (<i>Outlines the commitment and support the MAV provides to local government actions to positively influencing cultural diversity</i>) • Local Government Act (<i>Outlines the role and responsibilities of Local Governments in Victoria</i>)
City of Port Phillip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Port Phillip Council Plan 2021-2031 (<i>Strategic Direction one, Inclusive Port Phillip</i>) • Health and Well-being Plan • Child Safe Standards (<i>Standard 5: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice</i>)

MAC membership 2024/2025

The Committee membership aims to reflect the diversity of the City of Port Phillip, including representatives from established communities, newly emerging communities, people seeking asylum, former refugees, and older and young people. To be eligible, Committee members must work in, or be a resident of, the City of Port Phillip and need to be able to demonstrate:

- Community networks and linkages within local multicultural, refugee or asylum seeker communities.
- A good knowledge and understanding of the local issues that are of relevance to our multicultural communities and a commitment to multiculturalism, and the strengthening of a diverse community that encourages the participation and inclusion of all residents.
- An ability to represent a broad range of views that reflect the diversity of the community.
- An ability to facilitate, negotiate and influence outcomes and resolve conflict.

In 2024, Councillor Rhonda Clarke was appointed to represent Council until August 2024, followed by Councillor Libby Buckingham in 2025. James Seow was elected Chair in December 2023 with Hélène Kammoun as Deputy Chair throughout 2024 and 2025.

In 2024/2025, the following community members sat on the MAC:

Current Members	Position
Alba Chliakhtine	Committee member and Chair of Welcoming Cities subcommittee
Alex Kats	Committee member
Tina Keen	Committee member
Altaf Ali Mohammed	Committee member
Vasileios Tsialtas	Committee member
Joshua Goodman	Committee member
Keir Semenov	Committee member (retiring member as of January 2024)
Naomi Sherborne	Committee member (retiring member as of January 2024)
Leonardo Pereira	Committee member (retiring member as of January 2024)
Office Bearers	Position
James Seow	Chair from December 2023
Hélène Kammoun	Deputy Chair (on leave from October 2023 to December 2024) resumed in January 2025.
Council Representative	Ward
Cr Libby Buckingham	Balaclava Ward (from December 2024)
Cr Rhonda Clark	Canal Ward (from May 2023 to August 2024)

Membership

The MAC terms of reference states that the committee is composed of up to 13 members appointed by Council. In 2024 and 2025, there were eight members active in the committee. Recruitment did not occur in 2024, as originally the term of members was ending September 2024 aligning membership to Council term.

Retiring members

Leonardo Pereira and Naomi Sherborne were on leave from MAC in 2023. In January 2024, they formally submitted their resignation. Keir Semenov submitted his resignation at the start of January 2024.

Council and MAC thank the retiring members for their commitment and the wealth of knowledge and experience they brought to the committee. The retiring members have been exceptional advocates for the needs and aspirations of City of Port Phillip's multicultural communities.

MAC Action Plan

Each year, MAC develops an annual Action Plan in response to the objectives in its Terms of Reference and aligned to key outcomes in the Council Plan 2021-2031 and the Welcoming Cities Standard.

MAC met in March 2024 and March 2025 to determine its priorities for each year, which included the following:

Priorities 2024

- Provide advice on key Council policy and frameworks.
- Provide advocacy on key multicultural policies including Welcoming Cities Standard and Multicultural Statement of Commitment.
- Promote intercultural exchange and social connection.
- Build the capacity of the Committee to understand the needs of the local community, including collecting and analysing demographic data to determine the cultural, religious, and linguistic composition of the local community.
- Provide advice to Council about opportunities to increase capacity and skills to engage with a culturally diverse community and respond appropriately and effectively to their needs.

Priorities 2025

- Provide advice on key Council policy and frameworks.
- Provide advice to Council about opportunities to increase its capacity and skills to engage with a culturally diverse community and respond appropriately and effectively to their needs.
- Promote intercultural exchange and social connections.

These priorities align with the Council Plan Directions of:

- **Inclusive:** A City that is a place for all members of our community, where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities.
- **Vibrant:** A City that has a flourishing economy, where our community and local businesses thrive, and we maintain and enhance our reputation as one of Melbourne's cultural and creative hubs.
- **Well-Governed:** A City that is a leading local government authority, where our community and our organisation are in a better place because of our collective efforts.

Subcommittees and working Groups

The following MAC working groups/subcommittees were established 2024 and 2025:

- Welcoming Cities sub-committee
- Anti-racism sub-committee

Welcoming Cities subcommittee:

Current Members	Position
Alba Chliakhtine	Chair of Welcoming Cities subcommittee
Vasileios Tsialtas	Subcommittee member
James Seow	Subcommittee member
Joshua Goodman	Subcommittee member
Hélène Kammoun	Subcommittee member (on leave from October 2023 to December 2024)

Anti-racism subcommittee:

Current Members	Position
Joshua Goodman	Chair of Anti-racism subcommittee
Alex Kats	Subcommittee member
James Seow	Subcommittee member
Vasileios Tsialtas	Subcommittee member

Welcoming Cities Standards

Council became a “committed” member of the Welcoming Cities network in 2022. A “committed” local council publicly states their intent to champion the principles of welcoming and inclusion.

Committed local councils join a network of like-minded peers and gain the benefit of support and experience to chart their progress and identify the next steps towards becoming a Welcoming City.

The Standard establishes the framework for local councils to:

- Benchmark their cultural diversity, inclusion policies and practices across the organisation.
- Identify where and how further efforts could be directed.
- Evaluate progress over time.

The Standard allows Council to assess its current activity against six categories: Leadership, Social and Cultural Inclusion, Economic Development, Learning and Skills Development, Civic Development, and Places and Spaces. MAC incorporated these six categories into its Action Plan alongside the Council Plan Directions.

Consultation specific to Council business

Council recognises the value of community committees as noted in the Council Plan: *“We will partner with our Older Persons Advisory Committee, Youth Advisory Committee, Multicultural Advisory Committee, Multi-Faith Network, LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and establish other committees, where relevant, to ensure the diversity of our community’s experience is represented in decision-making.”*

The Committee provided input into the following Council documents:

- Future South Melbourne - South Melbourne Structural Plan
- Places to Live: Port Phillip Housing Strategy
- Council’s Language Services Guidelines
- Council Plan and Budget 2024/25 (Year 4)
- Plan for Port Phillip 2025-35
- Community Safety Plan

Below are general themes and issues raised by the committee:

- The Council must lead with a robust, community-led multicultural strategy, developed by a specialist consultant and shaped by lived experience. This includes in-depth consultations with multicultural communities across Port Phillip, ensuring input from newly arrived migrants, long-standing ethnic communities, and emerging diaspora groups.
- Prioritise ongoing funding cycles and partnerships to build resilience and sustainability in the multicultural arts sector. Multicultural arts serve as a vehicle for community cohesion, healing, and identity, especially for newer and underrepresented communities.
- Low-cost community spaces are important to multicultural communities especially in pockets of high-density housing. Community spaces are crucial for fostering inclusivity and positive social interactions within multicultural communities. They provide settings for shared experiences; help break down social barriers and allow for the celebration of diverse cultures while also creating spaces for interaction.
- Affordable, secure housing is foundational to community cohesion. This is particularly true for multicultural communities, migrants, and refugees who face additional barriers to stable housing. New migrants frequently take low-paying jobs, making it difficult to afford housing in high-demand areas. Due to affordability constraints, new migrants often live in high-density housing, which can further exacerbate challenges with space and privacy. Public housing, which is designed to be affordable, often houses a large proportion of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Racism should be considered as part of the Council’s efforts to deepen community and psychological safety for community members. The rise in reported incidents of racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination across Victoria demands a proactive local response. Targeted education campaigns, anti-racism training, and inclusive programming that reaches all corners of the community, including schools, workplaces, and

public institutions must be implemented. Investment must prioritise programs co-designed with multicultural communities that address both immediate safety concerns (e.g. hate speech and harassment) and longer-term social inclusion needs.

- Council’s community engagement approach should be diverse in nature. A targeted approach is needed especially with community groups that have minimal trust with authorities. Community safety is about fostering trust, connectedness, and civic participation. Well-funded, locally tailored cohesion programs build neighbourhood resilience, strengthen social ties, and help prevent marginalisation that can lead to isolation or radicalisation,
- It is important that Council commits to making its communication accessible to everyone by providing translated materials where possible and ensuring that all external communication is written in simple, clear English that is impactful and consistent across different platforms.
- Council’s language services should be streamlined and accessible for the residents.
- Funding outcomes should be reviewed annually in consultation with MAC and community representatives to ensure desired impacts such as tangible safety outcomes (e.g. reduced incidents of discrimination) and positive subjective experiences (e.g., increased sense of belonging, trust in local institutions) are measured, reported and published.

Welcoming Cities Subcommittee

The Welcoming Cities subcommittee supports the Council’s progress towards the Welcoming Cities Standard, the national standard for cultural diversity, and inclusion policy and practice in local government to create communities where everyone can belong.

Figure 8 indicates the categories to be addressed at each level of accreditation. Council is a “committed” member. The subcommittee has been investigating opportunities for future advice to Council in working towards become an “established” member.

 Committed	 Established	 Advanced	 Excelling	 Mentoring
Council signed on to be a member of the Welcoming Cities Network	1. Leadership	1. Leadership	1. Leadership	Excelling, plus approval by Advisory Committee
		2. Social & Cultural Inclusion	2. Social & Cultural Inclusion	
		3. Economic Development	3. Economic Development	
			4. Learning & Skills Development	
			5. Civic Development	
			6. Places & Spaces	

Figure 5: Welcoming Cities categories.

In 2024, the subcommittee met six times and developed a “Welcoming Cities roadmap”. This document provides recommendations for Council to consider in 2025 and beyond. It also contains an overview of the exploration work completed by the subcommittee. A high-level project plan was developed to illustrate how Welcoming Cities can intersect with existing Council initiatives.

Below is a summary of key recommendations for Council:

Initial steps for consideration:

- Understanding the Council aspirations of being a Welcoming Cities Network member, and benefits of achieving accreditation against the Welcoming Cities Standards.
- Exploring and understanding the resources required for Council to embark on this work.
- Exploring the role that MAC can play in influencing and advocating for Welcoming Cities.
- A second self-assessment against the Welcoming Cities Standards could occur, in view of the Welcoming Cities Standards update in May 2024. The Council could identify and address gaps with MAC and incorporate actions into future plans and frameworks.

In 2025, the subcommittee advocated for a Multicultural Strategy to be formed within the municipality. The subcommittee decided that this strategy would form the basis and rationale for the Welcoming Cities accreditation to be championed.

Anti-racism Subcommittee

In May 2024, MAC members raised concerns about the rise of antisemitism and social cohesion in the municipality. An increase in antisemitic incidents and graffiti in City of Port Phillip highlighted the need for targeted interventions to combat hate crimes and promote social cohesion. MAC formed the anti-racism subcommittee to better understand the local context. The subcommittee met three times before the caretaker period.

In December 2024, a terrorist attack and fire occurred in the Adass Israel Shule in Ripponlea. Shortly after, Council unanimously passed a motion to express solidarity with the Jewish community. Key committee members were instrumental in providing information and community intelligence that supported Council in its response and recovery process.

MAC activities, capacity building and engagement

In the 2024 and 2025, MAC members identified a need to strengthen members’ capacity to understand the needs of the local community, including collecting and analysing demographic data to determine the cultural, religious, and linguistic composition of the local community



Figure 6: MAC members with Cr Rhonda Clark at the end-of-year celebration dinner. Left to right: Joshua Goodman, H  l  ne Kammoun, Vasileios Tsialtas, Cr Rhonda Clark, James Seow, and Alex Kats.

Welcoming Cities Symposium 2024

The Welcoming Cities Symposium occurred in Brisbane from 30 April to 2 May 2024. Alex Kats, Alba Chliakhtine, Vasileios Tsialtas and James Seow attended a live streaming on the first day of the symposium to gather insights to inform MAC’s work

Understanding the needs and challenges of Port Phillip’s multicultural communities

In May and June 2024, the committee participated in discussions and a presentation to learn more about the rise of antisemitism locally. In July 2024, MAC members analysed demographic data to better understand City of Port Phillip’s cultural, religious, age, gender and linguistic composition. The committee was committed to adopting a continual learning and reflective practice to identify gaps in knowledge and practice so that it could highlight to Council the needs and concerns of intersectional groups.

Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Blueprint for Action (Department of Health)

In July 2024, Adriana Ridzwan (Senior Policy Officer, Diverse Communities) from Department of Health presented information on the Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Blueprint for Action. The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System found that the current mental health system is not responsive to the needs of Victorians from multicultural, LGBTIQ+ and disability backgrounds. The Framework is a long-term strategy for recreating a more equitable system that responds to the needs of diverse communities.

A Community Response to the Multicultural Framework Review

James Seow participated in this forum on 21 August 2024 organised by Polaron Connect and Myriad Kofkin Global. This event provided a much-needed opportunity for multicultural organisations, leaders and community members to share their views on the Multicultural Framework Review released by the Australian Government. There were panel discussions on multicultural and community leadership, and national languages policy. Expectations of a National Multicultural Commission, what multicultural leaders could do to strengthen diversity, and the system barriers to change were also covered in breakout discussions.

<p>Launch of the Victorian Antisemitism Report 2023</p> <p>James Seow, Joshua Goodman and Alex Kats attended the launch of the 2023 Victorian Antisemitism Report on 26 August 2024. The report highlights the 364 antisemitic incidents in 2023. This was the highest recorded in a calendar year compared to 2018-2022 and surpassed the total number of incidents combined in the preceding three years.</p>
<p>Mapping Social Cohesion Report 2024</p> <p>Vasileios Tsialtas attended the online launch of the Mapping Social Cohesion Report 2024 on 19 November 2024. This report presents findings from the latest Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion Survey. The report builds on the knowledge gained through the sixteen earlier national surveys (2007, and 2009 to 2023).</p>
<p>Advisory Committee Engagement on the Plan for Port Phillip</p> <p>Vasileios Tsialtas and Alba Chliakhtine joined a workshop on 4 December 2024 designed specifically for members of Council's Advisory Committees. Together with other participants, they were consulted on the Council's 10-year Community Vision and priorities in the coming four years. Their valuable feedback informed the development of the Plan for Port Phillip 2025-2029, a crucial document in guiding the Council's strategies and actions.</p>
<p>Victorian Multicultural Review</p> <p>Alex Kats attended a consultation at Glen Eira Council on the 28 May 2025 to provide community feedback on the Victorian Multicultural Review. The review is part of the Victorian Government's efforts to examine multicultural mechanisms that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver their legislated/agreed functions and objectives • address and prevent racism and discrimination • promote community harmony and reject division in the context of local and global events • rebuild interfaith dialogue • address local issues and community crises in a timely and strategic way • engage the broader Victorian community in matters relating to social cohesion



Figure 7: James Seow (MAC chair) with the Older Persons Advisory Committee Chair, Wendy Priddle, and LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee Chair, Ange Barry.



Figure 8: James Seow and Joshua Goodman at the launch of the Victorian Antisemitism Report 2023.

Multicultural and events

Cultural Diversity Week (March) and Refugee Week (June) are two significant celebrations in the multicultural calendar. In 2002, the City of Port Phillip declared itself a Refugee Welcome Zone in support of the Refugee Council of Australia campaign. This declaration formed a commitment in spirit to welcoming refugees into our community.

Cultural Diversity Week is a time to celebrate the power, influence and stories of Victoria's rich multicultural communities. 21 March is the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day reminds us that while celebrating multiculturalism is vital, so too is supporting and advocating on behalf of multicultural communities. The celebration of this week and the 21 March aligns with Council's Statement of Commitment to culturally, linguistically, religiously and ethnically diverse communities.

MAC provided creative ideas and helpful feedback to enhance programming. Members also actively attended events and participated as speakers or emcees.

Cultural Diversity Week 2024

James' story - connecting through food

Port Phillip resident and Chair of our Multicultural Advisory Committee, James, shares his story with us and talks about how food can bring people and communities together.



The theme for 2024, “Our Shared Stories – Celebrating Together”, invites the community to reflect on individual experiences and recognise how each story has the potential to create shared connections and understanding. Council delivered five community events that were attended by 1317 residents. MAC members attended many of these events:

Figure 9: James Seow in Smartphone Stories and a Council's social media campaign for Cultural Diversity Week 2024.

- Diverse library programming which included a local author talk by George Kyriakou, and a classical Indian musical performance by Vinod and Anubrata.
- Cultural Diversity Week family event at St Kilda library, an afternoon of family-friendly activities celebrating our community's diverse cultures, including Cool Capoeira and craft activities with Space 2b.
- A community-led event, “Let's celebrate our diverse city”, on 19 March 2024 in which 18 of our city's multicultural seniors groups come together to host a spectacular afternoon filled with stories, music, food, art, and movement.
- Welcome to Diversity Week Walk at Station Pier celebrated the inclusive multicultural heritage of Port Phillip and followed the immigration trail starting from Station Pier where many ancestors began their journey in Australia.

James Seow emceed the “Let's celebrate our diverse city” event. James was also featured in a video as part of Council's social media campaign promoting Cultural Diversity Week. The video was an outcome of a Smartphone Stories project that MAC had planned for in 2022. Smartphone Stories is a fun, hands-on interactive project that teaches participants to tell their stories with self-made videos.



Figure 10: James Seow, Cr Peter Martin and Alba Chliakhtine at the "Let's celebrate our diverse city" event during Cultural Diversity Week 2024.

Cultural Diversity Week 2025

The theme "Embrace the Journey, Shape Our Future" highlighted the unique and shared cultural journeys that defined our diverse communities. It encouraged us to honour our own cultural stories and those of others, and fostered understanding, belonging and connection. Council's commitment to social cohesion and an inclusive Port Phillip was reinforced during the celebration.

Campfire Stories – Celebrating stories of our community

Council invited community to come together for an evening of storytelling at Campfire Stories at St Kilda Library on 20 March 2025. First Nations speakers and inspiring local voices shared personal journeys of migration, resilience, and belonging. More than 50 residents attended the event.

The event started with First Nations stories, acknowledging that in multicultural Australia, this is the first story that should be told. This included a welcome by Uncle Mark Brown and Kelly Lehmann from Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, a conversation with Elder Judith Jackson, and original poems by Uncle Den Fisher.

Hosted by DJ and TV personality Miss Katalyna, the event featured Noè Harsel, CEO of the Jewish Museum of Australia; Rohini Vij, a Hindi educator and storyteller; and author George Kyriakou. James Seow joined the panel in his capacity as community leader and MAC Chair. Alba Chliakhtine, Vasileios Tsialtas and Alex Kats attended the event on behalf of MAC.



Figure 11: Campfires Stories to mark Cultural Diversity Week 2025. Left to right: James Seow, George Kyriakou, Miss Katalyna, Noè Harsel and Rohini Vij.

Reporting racism, marking March 21, the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

To mark the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Council in partnership with MAC developed community resources on how to respond to racism and antisemitism locally. These resources are available on Council's website, with information on how

to report to the Police, and seek legal assistance and emotional support. This information was distributed to key Council networks. This raised local community awareness of racism, human rights, reporting pathways, and support services. This day reminded the community that while celebrating multiculturalism is vital, so too is supporting and advocating on behalf of multicultural communities.



Figure 3: Campfire Stories speakers: James Seow, Noè Harsel, Rohini Vij, Miss Katalyna, Elder Judith Jackson, Uncle Den Fisher and George Kyriakou.

Refugee Week 2024

The 2024 Refugee Week theme was “Finding Freedom” with a focus on family. Park Towers Housing Community Hub hosted a community-led event filled with food, music, dance, and sports. This event was co-designed by a resident of Park Towers and supported by Space 2b Social Design and various Council departments. Highlights of the event include:

- A performance by the Russian Choir “Lotus”.
- A cooking demonstration by a local resident of Park Towers showcasing Eritrean cuisine.
- Interactive family-focussed activities led by Artbus and Council’s Library Children’s and Youth Service.
- A basketball clinic by a local young resident who is an upcoming basketball player.

Over 51 per cent of tenants of Park Towers are from multicultural background. Many have a refugee experience, fleeing from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea. Alba Chliakhtine and Vasileios Tsialtas attended the event with local residents as a sign of solidarity and support.

Refugee Week 2025

“Finding Freedom: Diversity in community” was the theme for 2025. MAC members emphasised the need to incorporate local experience and stories into the celebration. Port Phillip libraries collaborated with Grandmothers for Refugees to host a community event, A Conversation with Grandmothers for Refugees, at St Kilda Library. A panel of grandmothers shared their experience in supporting and speaking for refugee rights.

To commemorate World Refugee Day 2025, St Kilda Town Hall was lit up in light blue from 20 to 21 June. While there is no universally recognised colour for World Refugee Day, the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) light blue logo is widely associated with the day. To affirm Council's commitment as a Refugee Welcome Zone, Council's “Refugees Welcome Here” banners were displayed at customer service counters during the week.

Acknowledgement

This report was prepared and endorsed by the Multicultural Advisory Committee on 10 June 2025.

James Seow

Chairperson

Multicultural Advisory Committee

