



Local Government and best practice in multicultural policy and programs



The Multicultural Council of Tasmania

Introduction

There are many benefits for cities arising from increasing cultural diversity and retaining more migrants. Local governments play an important role in creating socially cohesive communities and could be playing a more significant role to attract and retain migrants in Tasmania. This Issues Paper showcases some best practices of Australian local councils as a way to encourage Tasmanian Councils to take new and more significant steps in multicultural policy and programs.

It is often said that local governments know and understand their communities better than any other level of government. Some local governments have large numbers of new arrivals and diverse cultures and these councils respond more quickly and become 'trailblazers'. Such councils have much to offer in terms of lessons learned for those councils who have less cultural diversity.

Local governments around Australia have different levels of responsibility due to differing state and territory legislative frameworks. Budget constraints can also limit services offered and the investment in new initiatives. Despite this there are many inspiring examples of work being done at the local government level to promote multicultural policies and programs.

This Issues Paper is a review of the policies and programs of 46 local councils of which five are Tasmanian local councils and 41 interstate local councils. Phone interviews were conducted with 11 councils and face to face interviews with two councils. In addition to local councils, recommendations were sought from Multicultural NSW and the Victorian Multicultural Commission and local settlement service providers.



What are Tasmanian local governments doing?

According to the 2011 Census, Tasmania has the lowest proportion of people born overseas, standing at 11.6% of the population. All the other states have double the proportion of overseas born. There are a number of issues that affect whether migrants choose to settle in Tasmania, including training and employment opportunities, feeling welcome and safe and the availability of space for cultural, religious and community gatherings.

There are 29 local councils within Tasmania with new arrivals predominantly settling around Hobart and Launceston. We have reviewed the 2011 Census data and the current multicultural policies and programs of five local governments in Tasmania.

Kingborough City Council

17.2% of the population in the Kingborough region were born overseas, of which 6.4% are from non-English speaking countries. The percentage increase of overseas born since 2006 was 2.4%.

Kingborough Council became a [Welcome Refugee Zone](#) in 2014.

Clarence City Council

10.1% of the population in Clarence region were born overseas, with the majority from English speaking countries. The increase of overseas born since 2006 was 1.4%.

In 2014 Clarence become a Welcome Refugee Zone and also joined the 'Racism it Stops with me Campaign'.

Clarence City Council holds the [World Games Day](#) biannually.



Glenorchy City Council

11% of the population in the Glenorchy region were born overseas, almost 6.9% from non- English speaking countries. The increase of overseas born since 2006 was 2.4%.

Glenorchy City Council holds the Moonah [‘Taste of the World’](#) festival annually and has worked with others to hold the multicultural women’s forum [‘Hear Our Voices’](#).

Launceston City Council

11.6% of the population in the Launceston region were born overseas. Of this 6.4% were from non- English speaking countries. The increase of overseas born since 2006 was 3.4%.

Launceston City Council provides funding for Kulture Konnect Program run via the National Job Link to engage younger migrants in community activities and services.

Launceston City Council (in partnership) initiated the [Human Library](#) as a forum for the public to hear community stories including those of migrants and refugees.

Hobart City Council

21% of the population in the Hobart region were born overseas. Of this 13.6% were from non- English speaking background. The increase of overseas born since 2006 was 6.5%.

Hobart has developed a [Multicultural Strategy](#) and produces and promotes the [Cultural Diversity and Youth Services Map](#).

The Hobart City Council has an [International Student Ambassador Program](#) encouraging links between International students and the broader community.



Tasmanian Local Council Initiatives

	Kingborough	Clarence	Glenorchy	Launceston	Hobart
Multicultural Strategy					Yes
Welcome Refugee Zone	Joined 2014	Joined 2014		Joined 2010	Joined 2004
Racism – it stops with me campaign		Yes	Yes		Yes
Working with other partner groups		Attends the Networking for Harmony group 4 times a year	The Glenorchy Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee 6 times a year		Convenes Networking for Harmony Multicultural Advisory Committee 4 times a year
Grants available to migrant/refugee communities		2 successful multicultural grants in last 5 years		5 grants in last 5 years Example: South Sudan Independence Day celebrations	3-4 a year in last 5 years Examples: Chinese New Year Fiesta Italia Hobart Language Day
Multicultural Festivals		Biannual ‘World Games Day’	Annual ‘Moonah Taste of the World’		support to multicultural community festivals in form of grants, sponsorship, supply of advice (eg environmental management) and equipment (eg. Chairs) Annual ‘Harmony Day’
Availability of Community Space		Recognise need	Recognise need. Consulting towards a masterplan		Recognise need – some smaller space available at reduced rates

Training and Employment Programs			Informal – in conjunction with other service providers	Funding to Kulture Konnect via National Job Link \$4000/per year for last 3 years	In conjunction with TAFE 1-2 students/year for 3 day/4 week placements Salamanca market subsidised stall available 3-4 X/year
Translated materials /translator service			Currently updating services.		Translation of a general council information sheet in 12 different languages
Culturally appropriate burial sites	Available through private company		Yes	Yes	
International Student Engagement			Information provided to international students through UTAS		International student Ambassador program
Sport and other community programs			Youth leadership for boys program accessed at Newtown High Youth, children and aged services made specific to migrant population as needs identified		Reduced fees to Aquatic Centre for bridging-visa holders. Sponsorship through grant schemes Youth, Arts and Recreation programs
Other			Convened ' Hear Our Voices ' forum – migrant woman's voices School 'story' program Community cookbook	Human library	Cultural Diversity and Youth Services Map Waste to Wonderful textile skill support
Cultural Awareness Training for Staff					Human library training for all council staff and relevant volunteers in 2015

Best practice social cohesion initiatives

For many migrants and refugees it is common to feel isolated in their new community. Racism is a major issue in human conflict and is the antithesis to promoting social cohesion within communities. Local governments have built innovative initiatives around the Australian Human Rights Commissions' '[Racism – It stops with me](#)' Campaign.

Darebin City Council, responded to national findings about higher levels of racism in their community by conducting a local inquiry into racism. The council called for submissions and held a public hearing on the issue. The result was a [racism strategy](#) and a 'Say No to Racism' training package including a community based DVD of local experiences.

Moreland City Council, run 1 day free [Bystander Training](#) to the community, in response to racism experienced on public transport. The training helps concerned bystanders understand how to intervene in safe and helpful ways.

Dandenong City Council, established an anti-racism '[Speak Out](#)' program which invited local people to share stories that affirm and celebrate positive responses to acts against racism. The project was awarded the 'Multicultural Australia – Strength in Diversity' award at the National Awards for Local Government in June 2014.



Best practice in supporting cultural celebrations

Community interaction is fundamental to creating a knowing and understanding of the diversity that exists in our cities and towns. Many councils have one or more multicultural festivals that showcase diversity, draw people together and create awareness.

Many festivals that highlight multiculturalism within their jurisdictions are held in conjunction with 'Harmony Week' or 'Refugee Week'.

Whittlesea Council, hold an annual [Welcome Expo](#) aimed at new arrivals to enable residents to connect to services and community groups and also to provide work experience for migrant TAFE students.

Shepparton Council, hold the ['Emerge Festival'](#), "A celebration of Greater Shepparton's arts and culture of Indigenous, emerging refugee and multicultural communities".

The award winning ['Refugee in my Backyard'](#) campaign run by Auburn Council, created understanding of the difficult journeys some new residents had taken to arrive in the city. It involved a simulated refugee camp with tour guides and stories of former refugees set up in the grounds of the Auburn Centre for Community for three weeks.



Interfaith dialogue or councils have been helpful bodies to engage faith-based communities in a way that promotes mutual understanding and a sharing of resources.

Darebin Council's [interfaith committee](#) "is a collaborative partnership between members of different faiths aimed at providing information, guidance and inspiration to the local community on matters related to the benefits of interfaith collaboration and dialogue".

Maribyrnong Council, supports the Brimbank and Maribyrnong [Interfaith Network](#) which is open to all who support their aims and principles and includes bus tours of various places of worship within the council area.

Support programs are run or supported by various councils aimed at increasing social opportunities and information for communities.

Rockhampton Regional Council, facilitate monthly different [Cultural Dances](#) through their regional library.

This Council also run [morning teas](#) to introduce new arrivals to the city and become aware of the services available.

Cassowary Regional Council, run a similar [morning tea](#) for Home and Community Care clients and their carers.

Maribyrnong Council, run a [Building Bridges – Cultural Games Project](#) that was run through local schools to encourage relationships between diverse cultures.

Monash City Council, have a '[Let's all play](#)' program providing grants for newly arrived migrant and refugee youth to enable their participation in sport.

Dandenong City Council, have a '[Welcome Video](#)' that features local business and other leaders welcoming new comers to Dandenong in their mother languages.

Training and employment

Gaining stable, satisfying and well-paid employment is a crucial part of the journey to settling successfully. A major reason for migrants and refugees leaving the state is to access greater job opportunities and because they lack the local experience valued by employers in Tasmania.

Employment opportunities for refugees and migrants can be created by assisting them to establish their own businesses. Research suggests that migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds are comparatively more successful at establishing small business enterprises when compared to Australian-born entrepreneurs and migrants from English speaking backgrounds.

For those coming from non-English speaking backgrounds, the Federal Government allowance of 510 hours English instruction is inadequate for many people moving into the Australian workforce. Some local governments facilitate access to English learning programs for longer periods to assist new arrivals with the job hunting process.

Translation services and materials are offered by many councils around Australia.

Canberra City has a '[Work Experience and Support Program](#)' for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The program runs for 12 weeks and comprises of four weeks office training followed by eight weeks training placement within the ACT public service.

Whittlesea Council, have a '[Work Ready](#)' program which is a 12 week/two day program to provide work experience in the Australian workforce building participant skills, networks and confidence to move into paid work.



Brisbane City Council, promotes employment via its '[Lord Mayors Multicultural Roundtable](#)' that promotes multicultural business by seeking to identify and facilitate opportunities for business and economic development. This is conducted by multicultural business awards, business scholarship scheme and a business mentoring scheme.

Dandenong Council's [Afghan Tea Cycle](#) project was designed to both promote the Afghan Bazaar cultural precinct in that location and to provide micro-business to an existing trader in the Bazaar.

They also run the '[Garden Renewal Asylum Seeker Project](#)' for asylum seekers working alongside Dandenong Council's bushland and garden services gaining work experience, skills and confidence in the Australian work setting.

In partnership with other service providers, Auburn City Council, offers free [employment and job career advice](#) one day a week along with free workshops to aid in obtaining and maintaining work.

Coffs Harbour Council, invites residents from refugee backgrounds to [volunteer](#) at the council's cultural facilities, such as the art gallery, museum and library.



Access to community space

Having access to community spaces and cultural facilities such as clubs, ethnic schools and places of worship is important in making a region attractive for migrants and refugees. Most councils acknowledge that demand for ‘cultural infrastructure’ exceeds supply but some report that there are underutilized facilities within their municipality.

In 2014 Multicultural NSW identified that local councils were increasingly rejecting applications for the development of religious facilities. They recommended that councils need to review the way applications related to religion were approached and particularly in light of the negative impact it may have on social cohesion.

Dandenong City Council, provide access to facilities for multicultural communities and activities on a lower scaled fee rate. The council has named its public square ‘[Harmony Square](#)’ envisaging the area being used by all community groups and enhancing harmony amongst the council’s residents.

Canberra City has a [Multicultural Centre](#) “designed for Canberrans of different backgrounds to meet, celebrate and share their cultures and gain assistance with settling into Canberra.” The centre hosts offices of more than 30 cultural groups and associations including some offering settlement services. It holds regular various multicultural classes and has a number of rooms for hire.

Auburn City Council, is in the process of building a [community centre](#) due to open in Sept 2015. The centre has been planned as a multipurpose community hub with charges at subsidised rate for local non-profit groups. Currently they offer up to 100% subsidised rates to community groups for weekday hire of their smaller facilities.

Griffith City Council, assisted in securing a loan for a local [Sikh community](#) to build a temple.

Maroondah City Council, assisted the [Chin community](#) to secure space utilising council owned sports pavilions that were not being fully accessed by sporting clubs. This is an important initiative to learn from as many councils have underutilised sporting facilities that could be better shared.

Other local government initiatives

During our review other initiatives stood out and are worth highlighting.

Moreland City Council, developed award winning [story boards](#) which use picture to assist in communicating a number of issues including health and legal. The Moreland City Council offers the use of the boards or modification of them to other councils.

Shire of Kulin, has developed and run the award winning [Camp Kulin](#). Camp Kulin provided activities for over 500 children in its first year of operation. The camps are open to children in Western Australia including those of migrant and refugee communities, offering scholarship camps for children affected by childhood trauma along with corporate programs, school excursions and school camps.

Councils need to be well linked with community service providers and organisations with good programs that may be able to improve these with council support. For example in Blacktown, council supported a program initially established by the police and a community service to deliver a program targeting problem [youth violence](#) generating increased social cohesion through safer business district and activities, engagement and employment for youth.

This Issues Paper is in no way an exhaustive review of all initiatives that local councils have in place for migrant and refugee communities, however this paper has highlighted some of the best practices occurring that we think are most appropriate for Tasmanian local governments looking to do more in this important policy space.



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