

Delivering for diversity

Cultural diversity plan 2016–2019

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Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Secretary's foreword

Culture goes to the heart of who we are and how we connect to others, defining our sense of identity and belonging and contributing to our health and wellbeing.

As Victorians, we all benefit from the cultural diversity our state is known for. It shapes our communities, our daily interactions, our entire way of life.

Our challenge as the government department responsible for supporting and enhancing the community's health and wellbeing is to ensure that all the work we do is attuned to the needs of our multicultural population.

With around half of all Victorians being either born overseas or having a parent born overseas, addressing this challenge is not optional. It is core business for us as policymakers, funders, service providers and system managers.

Responding effectively to cultural diversity is important for three main reasons.

First, our multicultural community presents specific health and wellbeing challenges, such as the ageing of established migrant groups or the particular hardships faced by recent refugees and asylum seekers.

Second, our efforts to deliver well-targeted support and care tailored to individual needs and preferences depend on having a good understanding of that person's cultural background.

And third, there is now good evidence that failure to respond effectively to cultural diversity leads to poor outcomes and adverse events.

The department's commitment to diversity is central to our goal of achieving better outcomes for Victorians. It is also core to our efforts to provide a workplace that is respectful and safe for all employees.

It is my pleasure to present the first cultural diversity plan for the new Department of Health and Human Services: *Delivering for diversity: cultural diversity plan 2016–2019*. Alongside *Moondani*, our Aboriginal inclusion plan, and other policies relating to specific population groups, the cultural diversity plan will sharpen our focus on diversity in many aspects of our work.

I encourage all staff of the department, together with our many partners, to embrace the opportunities this plan offers to achieve better outcomes for all Victorians.

I look forward to your support in driving the implementation of the plan over coming years.

Kym Peake

Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services (the department) has developed this cultural diversity plan as part of our obligations under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, and it takes place in the context of a whole-of-government approach to cultural diversity planning. The development of this plan is a key commitment in the soon-to-be released whole-of-government Multicultural policy statement.

This plan is a framework to embed cultural diversity in all the department's services, programs and policies. It builds on our wide-ranging efforts to improve services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These communities include those with a long-established presence in Victoria, as well as recently arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The plan aligns with Victoria's multicultural objectives to:

- maximise the benefits of our cultural diversity
- build the capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- promote social cohesion and community resilience
- ensure our services and infrastructure respond to the cultural diversity of our state.

The plan recognises that providing culturally responsive, competent, respectful and accessible services is a core responsibility of the department and the services it funds and delivers.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may also identify as being from other diverse groups, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, which may affect their experience and use of Victoria's health and human services. It is important we provide services that respond to and consider all forms of diversity.

This first cultural diversity plan for the new department outlines our priorities and key actions for responding to cultural and linguistic diversity across the range of departmental services, including public, acute and mental health, housing and homelessness, family violence, aged care, child protection, disability, sport and recreation, and community engagement services.

The department has specific policies and frameworks to improve the health, wellbeing and inclusion of Aboriginal Victorians. This plan does not detail this important work, but we recognise that Aboriginal Victorians are part of our cultural diversity and are diverse communities themselves.

The plan will guide our efforts over a four-year period, and we will supplement it with annual action plans. Our progress in implementing the plan will be included in the Victorian Government's annual report on achievements in multicultural affairs, which is tabled each year in parliament.

Vision

The department's vision is to develop and deliver policies, programs and services that support and enhance the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

We take a broad view of the drivers of good health and wellbeing, including the social, cultural and economic context in which people live.

This plan recognises that at the heart of the department's work are people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their communities. It also recognises that considering cultural diversity in all our policies, practices and programs will ensure we deliver inclusive, safe and accessible services.

Legislative and policy environment

In January 2015, the department brought together the functions of health, human services and sport and recreation. The new department has a unified vision to develop social and economic policies, programs and services that improve the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

The legislative framework that underpins the department's services provides for a person and family-centred approach to service delivery that responds to the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

This framework also protects human rights and equal opportunity, and aims to eliminate discrimination. It includes new government policies for improved access, equity and participation, public health and wellbeing, mental health and health literacy.

<i>Multicultural Victoria Act 2011</i>	<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i>	<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>	<i>The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001</i>
The <i>Multicultural Victoria Act 2011</i> provides the whole of government framework that recognises and values cultural, racial, religious and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria.	All Victorian Government departments and service providers have a positive duty under the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> to take reasonable and proportionate measures to identify and eliminate discrimination.	The <i>Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> sets out the basic rights of Victorians to live with freedom, respect, equality and dignity and requires public authorities to act compatibly with the Charter.	The Act prohibits behaviour that incites or encourages hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against another person or group of people because of their race and/or religion.
The forthcoming whole of Victorian Government Multicultural Policy Statement			
Department of Health and Human Services Delivering for diversity: cultural diversity plan 2016-19			
Other Department of Health and Human Services policies and plans (examples only):			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Charter of healthcare rights in Victoria</i> • <i>Consumer participation in healthcare: an equity approach</i> • <i>Delivering for all: access and equity (human services) language services policy</i> • <i>Refugee and asylum seeker access policies</i> 			

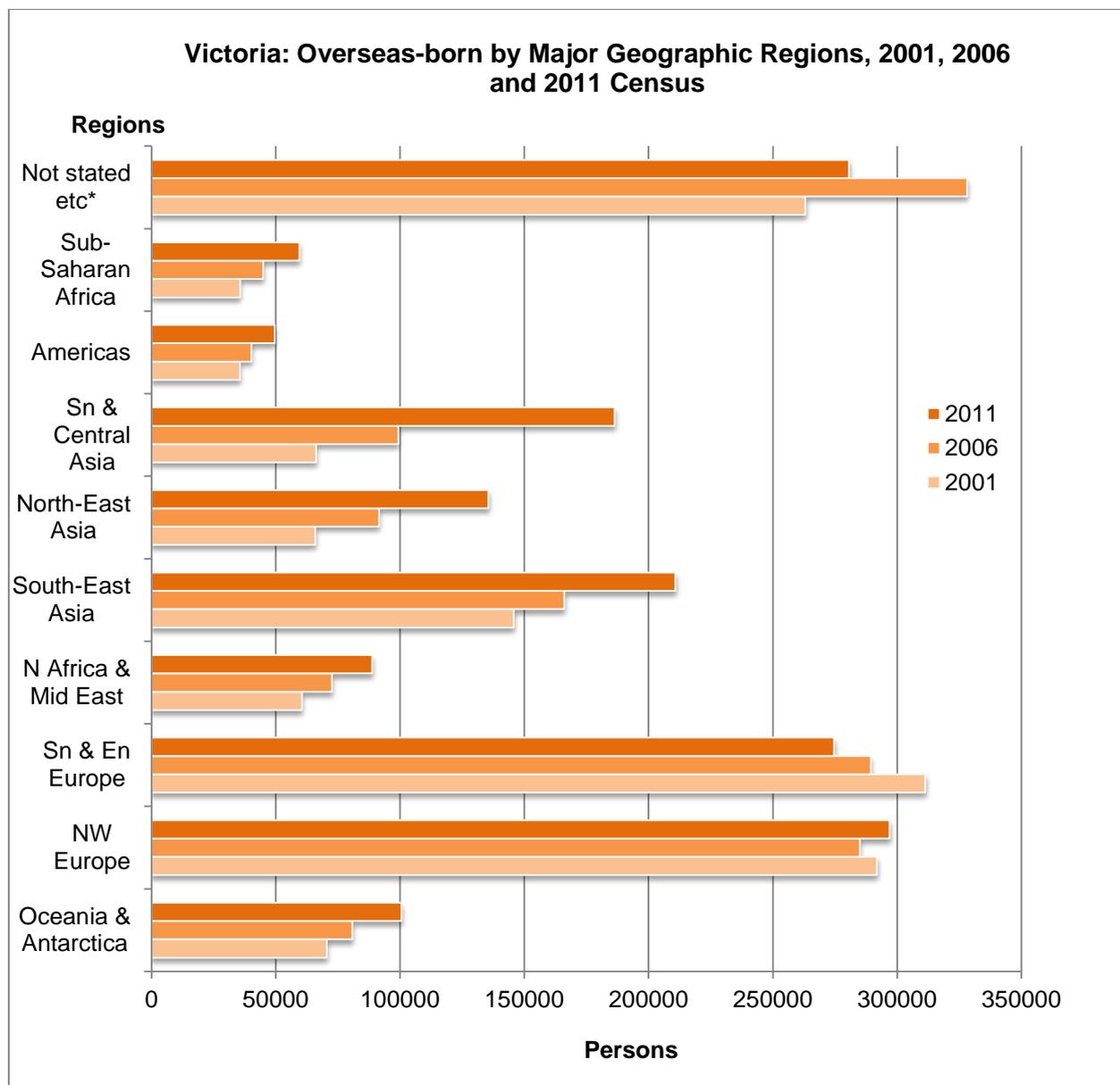
Context

Victoria's diversity

Victoria has a longstanding history of promoting and celebrating the benefits of cultural and linguistic diversity. The department reflects this history in its work to build accessible, responsive and equitable health and human services. Diversity is central to our mission and our strength.

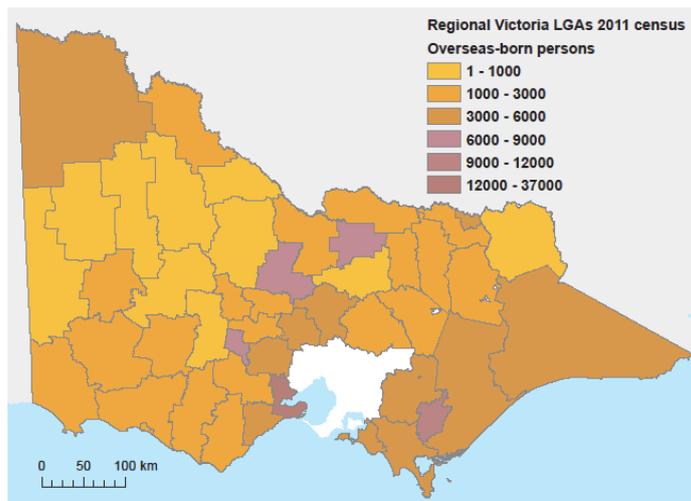
The 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing shows that Victorians come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages other than English at home, and follow some 130 religious faiths. Just over a quarter of Victorians were born overseas and nearly half were either born overseas or have a parent born overseas.

Figure 1: Overseas born in Victoria by Major Geographic Regions



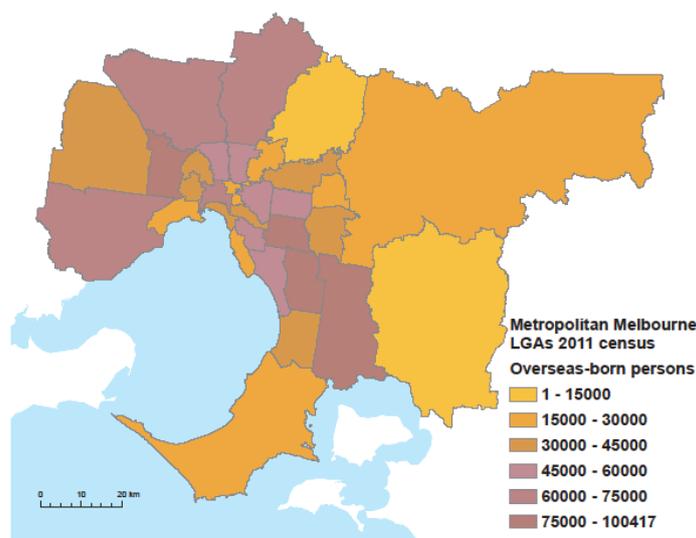
Source: Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

Figure 2: Victoria – Overseas-born by regional local government areas, 2001, 2006 and 2011 Census



Source: Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

Figure 3: Metropolitan Melbourne, overseas-born by local government areas 2011



Source: Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

As dynamic global patterns of migration change, Victoria is becoming more diverse and the mix of migrant countries of birth is changing.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugees and asylum seekers, contribute enormously to Victoria’s economic strength and social resilience. Ensuring their health and wellbeing is an investment in the state’s future.

Many people arriving in our state face significant challenges upon settlement. These challenges may include language and communication issues, discrimination, complex needs arising from their journey, arrival, settlement, and navigation of unfamiliar health and human service systems.

While people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have many shared experiences, they are themselves diverse, and face issues that intersect with their ethnic background in complex ways. This may be related to age, gender, sexuality, disability, legal status, faith and many other factors.

The department

The department provides and funds a wide array of services used by individuals and families from culturally diverse communities.

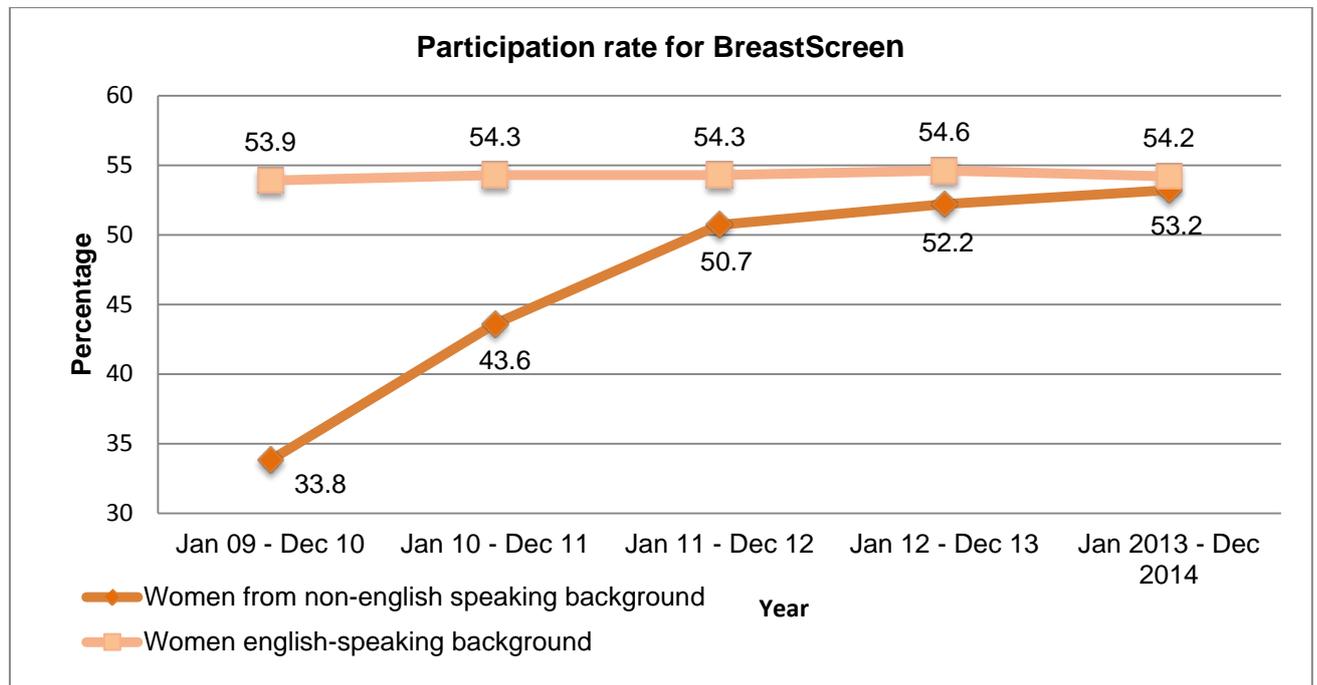
Delivering health and human services safely and effectively requires sensitivity to the ways in which cultural diversity affects need, help-seeking behaviour and the experience of individuals and families as they journey through our service system.

The extensive range of services the department funds and provides means that it connects with people throughout their lives. These services include but are not limited to child safety, housing and homelessness, primary health, hospitals and emergency care, public health, sport and recreation, mental health and aged care. The department also funds a range of community and economic participation activities that engage with culturally diverse communities.

The department is committed to building an engaged organisation with a collaborative culture. Recognising the cultural diversity of our clients and workforce will help to ensure our services meet the needs of the people we serve.

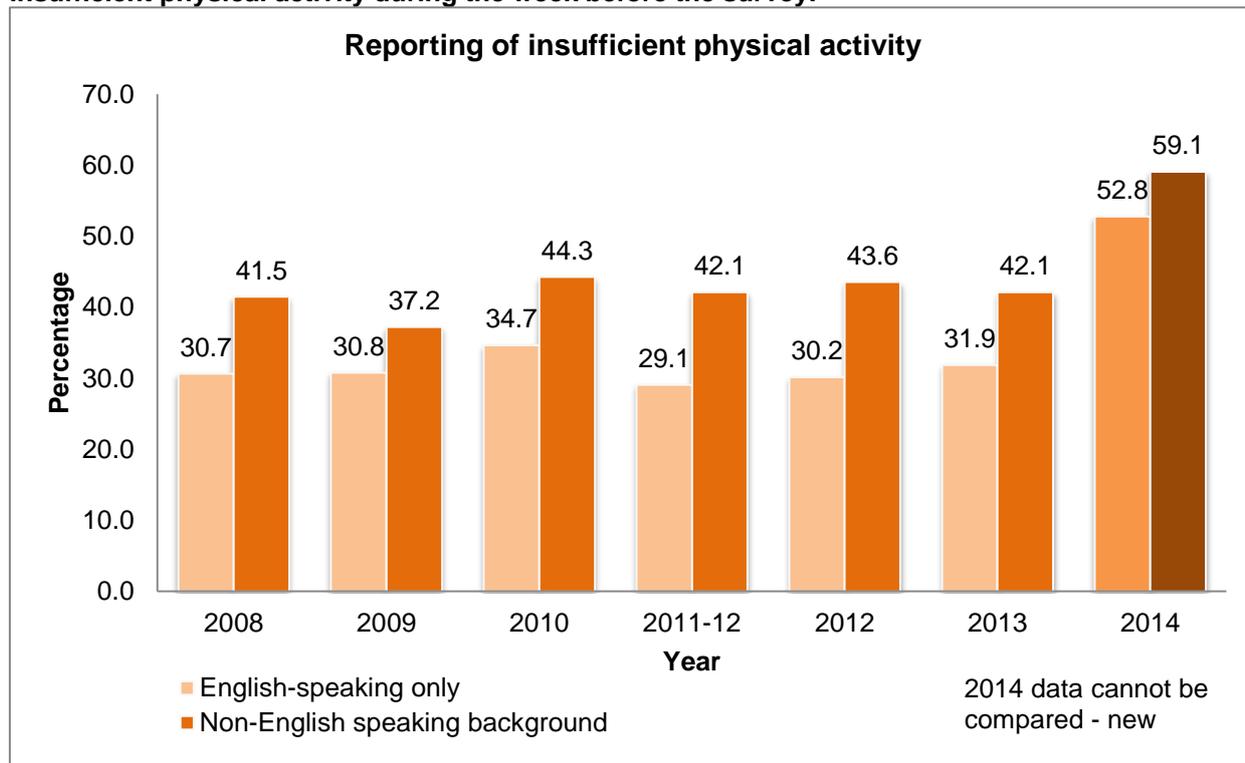
Figures 4–6 demonstrate areas where there are or have been differences in health and wellbeing outcomes for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Figure 4: BreastScreen Australia participation rate of non-English speaking background (NESB) Victorian women aged 50–59 years, compared with the participation rate of all Victorian women in the program aged 50–69 years.



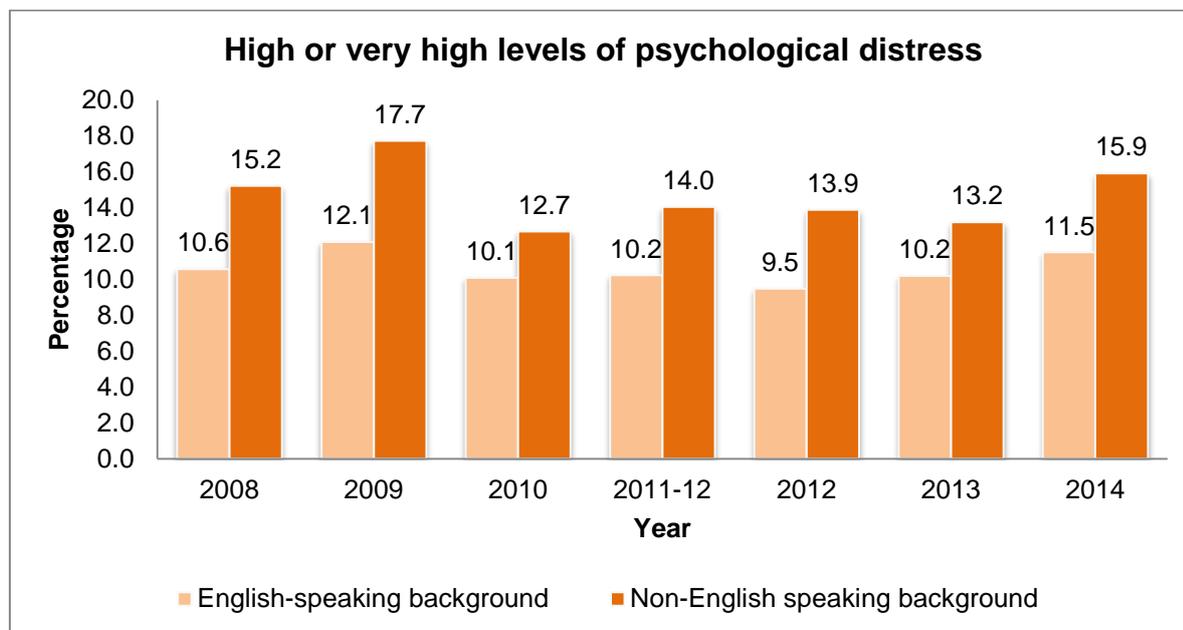
Source: Report on Government Services 2015

Figure 5: Proportion of Victorians from non-English speaking background (NESB), who reported insufficient physical activity during the week before the survey.



Source: Victorian Population Health Survey; annual survey.

Figure 6: Proportion of Victorians from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with high, or very high, levels of psychological distress.



Source: Victorian Population Health Survey; annual survey.

Guiding principles

The principles by which the department works with culturally diverse communities are detailed below.

Accessible

A person's ability to access health and human services should not be hindered by their country of birth, language, culture, race or religion. The department is committed to identifying and eliminating discrimination within a service system in which Victorians seek and receive the right services at the right time and setting.

Equitable

Equity means that all Victorians have the same right to access and receive high-quality, safe healthcare and human services. This does not mean that everyone receives the same care or service, but rather that all people have their needs met. The department will seek to minimise the factors that contribute to inequitable outcomes to the greatest extent possible and practical.

Evidence based

The department will use data and information about people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ensure services are effective and to inform service improvement. We will measure outcomes for culturally diverse communities.

Responsive

The healthcare and human service system will use a responsive and culturally sensitive approach to meet the needs and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This is central to the safety and effectiveness of the care provided, and it applies at the systemic, organisational, professional, community and individual level.

Participative

Client, carer and community participation, collaboration and consultation will inform service design and continuous improvement. This will improve the department's response to the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Accountable

The department will be accountable at all levels for its responses to the needs of culturally diverse communities, and for equity of access to services. We will be transparent in our efforts to maintain and improve cultural responsiveness, and evaluate outcomes.

Outcome areas

This section outlines the department's priorities in responding to cultural and linguistic diversity in health, human services and sport and recreation through four outcome areas.

Each outcome area includes objectives that reflect the department's aspirations for the work we do with culturally and linguistically diverse clients. The four outcome areas are:

1. Equitable and responsive services and programs
2. A culturally responsive workforce
3. Partnerships with diverse communities
4. Effective and evidence-based approaches

These outcome areas and objectives will be driven by yearly action plans. The action plans will reflect the areas of responsibility of the department, and include short, medium and long-term objectives.

Successive annual action plans will report progress against previous plans' objectives.

Outcome 1: Equitable and responsive services and programs

As Victoria's population becomes increasingly diverse and has more complex needs, our services and programs need to respond to cultural differences in the community.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may find it difficult to navigate unfamiliar services, or may need additional services or face discrimination. Services and programs must consider strategies to address access, while ensuring people's overall needs are met.

It is critical that we provide culturally safe environments in which individuals are not exposed to bias, discrimination or inappropriate behaviour. Providing a culturally safe and responsive environment empowers clients to make decisions on their own health and wellbeing.

People from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds often have a history of exposure to traumatic events, including war, loss of and/or separation from family members, human rights abuses and prolonged deprivation. Our models of care and support must recognise these issues.

We must also address language and communication barriers, and different understandings of health and wellbeing. This will include using new technologies for both text and non-text based communications, together with sustainable models for providing interpreters.

The department will engage with diverse communities to improve access to timely, equitable and responsive services. Responding to cultural and linguistic diversity is central to quality standards, risk management and accountability, as well as providing person-centred services based on consumer choice and preferences.

The department's work is at the core of maintaining a stable, cohesive and resilient society, and helps Victorians to connect and share with people from diverse backgrounds.

The following objectives outline the department's plan to work towards equitable and responsive services and programs.

Objective 1

Facilitate better access to services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by overcoming barriers associated with eligibility, communication, navigation, discrimination and relevance.

Objective 2

Use a range of communication strategies to provide information about the department's services and programs in languages other than English, to support people to make the best choices for their health and wellbeing.

Objective 3

Improve the planning, allocation and efficient delivery of language services according to need across all parts of the health and human services system.

Objective 4

Promote and support the implementation of cultural responsiveness measures in service quality standards and accreditation systems that apply to services funded by the department.

Outcome 2: Building a culturally responsive workforce

This outcome area relates to the department's internal workforce of over 11,000 staff and the wider health and human services workforce employed through funded organisations. The approaches to achieving this outcome may differ between these two workforces, but the intent remains the same.

The department's employees provide direct service delivery and are involved in policy development and program management. The department recognises that its responsiveness to the diverse communities it serves can be greatly enriched by developing and maintaining a culturally diverse health and human services workforce, which maximises the benefits of their diverse knowledge and experience.

A diverse departmental workforce will underpin a workplace culture of respect and responsiveness to the needs of culturally diverse communities. This applies equally to people who deliver services and those who develop policy and programs. Everyone has a role to play.

This requires targeted efforts in recruitment, orientation and retention, which may include recruitment practices where positions with high levels of contact with diverse communities are asked to demonstrate their cultural competence, knowledge and skills. It may also involve the design of specific types of jobs that draw on people's cultural background and cultural competency skills, such as peer workers or bicultural workers.

At the same time, the department owes a duty of care to all its employees to provide a workplace that is respectful of their cultural backgrounds and ensures a sense of cultural safety.

All health and human services workers, regardless of their background, should be supported to improve their cultural competence in service planning, policy and provision. The department encourages and supports staff to expand their knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity and the potential needs of vulnerable groups, such as people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. This includes:

- building on and developing awareness and skills of good practice in delivering culturally responsive services
- building on and developing effective communication strategies with culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- improving the understanding of diversity among cultural groups, including gender, sexuality, religious and political issues and beliefs
- improving systems and services to be more culturally appropriate and responsive.

The department will also continue to support a range of specific centres of excellence that provide a focus for workforce education, consultation and resource development relating to the health and wellbeing needs of diverse Victorians.

Organisations funded by the department are also encouraged to reflect the culturally diverse communities they serve through their workforce and training opportunities.

The following objectives on the next page outline the department's plan to build a culturally responsive workforce.

Objective 5

Develop, implement and evaluate a rolling learning and development plan to build the capabilities for cultural competence and responsiveness among staff within the department.

Objective 6

Promote culturally and linguistically diverse recruitment for positions at all levels in the department and monitor retention and staff experience.

Objective 7

Ensure sector workforce strategies and guidelines support cultural and linguistic diversity within an equity and fairness framework, ensuring cultural safety for all employees.

Objective 8

Incorporate cultural competence education and training in workforce development programs funded or supported by the department.

Objective 9

Encourage workforce design initiatives that support cultural responsiveness of service delivery.

Outcome 3: Partnerships with diverse communities

The department engages directly with diverse cultures to improve people's experience of services and enhance health and wellbeing outcomes.

We also recognise that culturally and linguistically diverse communities themselves contain diversity, and that people not only identify with ethnicity and language but other aspects of identity including faith, sexuality and gender.

The department will work in partnership with Victoria's multicultural communities in policy, planning, implementation and evaluation activities. We will promote opportunities for members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to join with us in collaborative service design and review processes at both local and statewide levels.

The department will demonstrate good governance in both its own management structures and its support and oversight of devolved governance, particularly the independent boards of public health services and non-government community service organisations. Effective governance means ensuring that the membership of these bodies reflects the cultural diversity of their clients and communities.

Many services funded or delivered by the department focus increasingly on tailored responses based on individual preferences, self-management and co-design with clients. Programs and services should consider cultural diversity when developing these responses.

The department fosters community engagement and social and economic participation, working with a wide range of partners, including local government, peak bodies and community organisations. This work is particularly relevant for multicultural communities.

Improving our partnerships with diverse communities will benefit the department and the communities we serve. It also contributes to the broader goals of social cohesion and community resilience across the whole population.

The following objectives on the next page outline the department's plan to build partnerships with diverse communities.

Objective 10

Develop and implement frameworks and processes that enable culturally and linguistically diverse clients, carers and communities to engage and participate in service planning, design and delivery.

Objective 11

Build recognition and understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse communities across the department, foster opportunities for engagement and recognise and acknowledge staff efforts in this.

Objective 12

Promote the recruitment and retention of suitable candidates for government-appointed boards and committees to ensure that these bodies reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities they represent.

Objective 13

Support funded organisations to strengthen partnerships with their culturally and linguistically diverse communities and to ensure that their own governance and advisory structures reflect the diversity of the populations they serve.

Outcome 4: Effective and evidence-based approaches

All Victorian Government departments must report on progress in achieving the objectives of their cultural diversity plans. This includes reporting on the use of language services, service use by culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and a range of agreed activity and outcome indicators.

The department will work towards a stronger outcome-based approach to engaging with diverse communities, using data and information to measure the effectiveness of services and to plan for improvements in the future.

The department will maintain a good information base by mapping and analysing relevant demographic, health status, service use, research and other data, and use this to plan for services. This will allow us to tailor our cultural responsiveness as community profiles and trends change.

We will also enhance data collection at a client and a population level, bearing in mind the challenges in capturing relevant, accurate information in ways that are sensitive and do not impose a burden on clients or services.

To improve our cultural responsiveness, we must have a better understanding of how effectively services are delivered. We will research, monitor and evaluate the services we deliver for culturally diverse Victorians.

The following objectives outline the department's plan to work towards effective and evidence-based approaches.

Objective 14

Conduct reviews of key departmental policies and plans across program areas to ensure they include cultural and linguistic diversity issues and reflect evidence-based best practice.

Objective 15

Improve data collection systems and reporting requirements to better capture key dimensions of cultural and linguistic diversity, migrant, refugee and asylum seeker background in client populations, and facilitate data linkage where appropriate.

Objective 16

Maintain up-to-date demographic information on cultural and linguistic diversity and settlement patterns across Victoria to inform health and human services planning, and enhance key indicators to monitor population health and wellbeing outcomes in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity.

Objective 17

Integrate agreed measures of service improvement for culturally diverse Victorians into accountability requirements for funded agencies, and provide feedback on performance relating to these measures.

Objective 18

Identify and showcase services and initiatives that have successfully embedded diversity and culturally sensitive, safe and inclusive practices.

Implementation and accountability

The department seeks to be accountable at all levels for its responses to the needs of culturally diverse communities and for equity of access by culturally diverse Victorians to our services and programs. This means being transparent about our efforts.

The Quality and Experience Committee of the Department's Executive Board will have primary responsibility for implementation, and all Deputy Secretaries will be required to report on relevant activities through this committee.

The department is required to report on progress in achieving the objectives of their cultural diversity plans. This includes reporting on the use of language services, service use by culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and a range of agreed activity and outcome indicators.

Annual action plans will be developed to drive implementation of this plan. This will facilitate the department's contribution to the annual Victorian Government Report in Multicultural Affairs tabled in parliament. Updates on progress will be shared across government departments through the Multicultural Leadership Group convened by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship.