

# **A Multicultural Act for Western Australia**

**Submission – February 2026**



# Table of contents

<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary of SSI Recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Response to Discussion Paper Questions/Themes</b>	<b>7</b>
What should be in the WA Multicultural Act?	7
3. What principles and values do you feel are important for a Multicultural Act to include?	7
4. How could a Multicultural Act better reflect the WA Government’s commitment to Aboriginal peoples as Western Australia’s First Peoples?	8
Applying a multicultural Act’s commitment to First Nations in practice	8
The Multicultural Act can bolster community engagement in prevention and early intervention to uplift communities, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal alike	9
6. What words do you think would be important to define in a Multicultural Act?	11
Independent multicultural advisory body	12
13. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?	12
A new WA Multicultural Affairs statutory body that acts on the advice of the independent multicultural advisory body will achieve greater impact	12
Public sector responsibilities	14
14. Do you think policies that require government authorities to respond to diverse needs (such as above), should be included in a Multicultural Act?	14
15. If yes, what policies do you think are the most important and should be included in a Multicultural Act?	14
Policies should require government adopt a holistic and iterative approach to communication that goes beyond providing information and resources	14
Government agencies’ information and resources will need to be tailored, developed and delivered by organisations that have relationships and trust with multicultural communities	16
16. Do you think the WA Government is doing enough to support CALD communities in WA? If not, what else should be done and how could this be reflected in a Multicultural Act?	17
Culturally responsive practice capability should be embedded across WA Government services, programs and workforce	17
17. What sectors do you think should be responsible for implementing a Multicultural Act (for example, public sector, local government)?	21
Responsibility should be appropriately allocated across the Multicultural WA agency, WA Government agencies and local government	21
Regional communities	22
20. How could a Multicultural Act ensure the issues of rural, regional and remote communities are considered?	22
The Independent Multicultural Advisory Body should include member/s who represent and have a record of success with rural, regional remote and multicultural communities	22

# Acknowledgement of Country

SSI acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise their continuous connection to Country.

## Background

SSI welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Western Australia's (WA) Office of Multicultural Interests' (the OMI) consideration of a Multicultural Act for WA.

SSI is a national non-for-profit organisation that delivers a range of human services that connect individuals, families, and children from diverse backgrounds with opportunities – including settlement support, disability inclusion programs, community engagement initiatives, culturally responsive, evidence-based and community informed responses to domestic, family and sexual violence including in regional and rural areas and training and employment pathways. At the heart of everything we do is a drive for equality, empathy, and celebration of every individual.

SSI was founded in Sydney in 2000 with the aim of helping newly arrived refugees settle in Australia. Over time, our expertise in working with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds served as the foundation for a gradual expansion into other social services and geographical areas.

In 2018, SSI merged with the Queensland-based Access Community Services and opened in Victoria, providing an extensive footprint across the eastern coast of Australia. In 2024-25, SSI supported over 53,000 people across almost 60 programs and community-based services nationally. We are also a leading provider of evidence-based insights into the social sector and are known as an organisation that can reach communities considered by many to be 'hard to reach'. In WA, SSI aspires to deliver a range of human services that connect individuals, families, and children from diverse backgrounds and diaspora community groups and leaders with opportunities.

With respect to multiculturalism, SSI has a track record of delivering culturally responsive and trauma informed support to children and families, particularly to migrants, refugees and others from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We build trusted relationships with local communities, service providers and government agencies and employ a culturally diverse, multilingual workforce with deep community ties and lived experience. SSI works within and across sectors to drive system level change through its [Activate Australia's Skills](#) campaign of which it is convenor. Comprising of over 130 organisations including businesses, unions, social services and community organisations, Activate Australia's Skills is advocating for reforms to improve skills and qualifications policy in order to address shortages crippling Australian communities, families and businesses.

It is from this broad portfolio of experience and expertise that SSI welcomes this consultation into a Multicultural Act for WA. Where we can provide a unique perspective our submission targets specific Questions, responses to some are grouped together.

# Summary of SSI Recommendations

The WA Office of Multicultural Interests is urged to adopt the following recommendations in its work in developing a Multicultural Act for WA. These recommendations are also accompanied by illustrations of how SSI a not-for-profit community organisation, has given effect to the features of this potential Multicultural Act.

SSI recognises that the scope of input sought from the public is on the overall architecture of the Multicultural Act, mainly its principles, institutions and processes to strengthen multiculturalism in WA. However, were the WA Government and WA Parliament to institute and pass a Multicultural Act for WA, it should do so as part of a comprehensive package that includes funding investment in programs and initiatives to be delivered by the agency responsible for administering the Act. Doing so would tangibly demonstrate the WA Government's commitment to strengthening multiculturalism through meaningfully applying in practice the Act's objectives, principles and requirements. As a starting point, those programs and initiatives can draw from the case studies and examples outlined in this submission.

## ***Recommendation 1:***

***That the WA Multicultural Act adopt the following principles:***

- a) Respect for cultural identity***
- b) Fairness and equality***
- c) Democratic participation***
- d) Commitment to community engagement and co-design***
- e) Diversity, such as cultural and language diversity, as a strength***
- f) Recognising Aboriginal peoples as Australia's First Peoples***
- g) Acknowledging the contributions of all communities***
- h) Supporting shared values and a commitment to Australia by all***
- i) The equal and inseparable importance of building a united, inclusive, and harmonious society that strives towards substantive equity***
- j) Taking action against racism and discrimination***

## ***Recommendation 2:***

***That the Multicultural Act include definitions from the WA Multicultural Policy Framework and include additional definitions of the following principles:***

- a) Community engagement***
- b) Co-design***
- c) Inclusion***

**Recommendation 3:**

**The Multicultural Act for WA establish a new Multicultural WA agency that has:**

- a) Primary and portfolio responsibility to administer the new Multicultural Act. This portfolio should be held by a senior Cabinet level minister, reflecting the importance of celebrating and embracing the richness of the State's diversity and strengthening multiculturalism**
- b) Regulatory powers to compel action and accountability by WA Government agencies to progress and meet the goals and requirements of multiculturalism-related policies**
- c) The ability to embed requirements of multiculturalism-related policies in all WA Government service and program contracts**
- d) Sustained substantial government funding investment to ensure the Multicultural WA agency's effective operations and administration of programs and initiatives**

**Recommendation 4:**

**The Independent Multicultural Advisory Body should:**

- a) Provide advice to the Multicultural WA agency, the Minister and other Ministerial portfolio holders and across WA Government departments and agencies**
- b) Include membership of representative/s that reflect rural/regional/remote communities' needs and where possible have familiarity, experience and expertise with multicultural communities and solutions to common challenges. This approach is adopted in NSW and Victoria for example**

**AND/OR**

**The Multicultural Act establish in parallel to the Independent Ministerial Advisory Body, Regional Advisory Councils that consist of members who reflect the diversity of the local community. Regional Advisory Councils would provide advice to both the Minister and to the Multicultural WA agency, although would be encouraged to work with the Independent Multicultural Advisory Body to give joint recommendations**

**Recommendation 5:**

**The Multicultural Act should:**

- a) Through regulations or legislative instruments such as Rules, include the WA Multicultural Policy Framework, the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality and the Western Australian Language Services Policy**
- b) Bestow upon the Multicultural WA agency responsible for administering the Act regulatory powers to require adherence and to those policies**
- c) Bestow reporting and transparency obligations on WA Government agencies. As a starting point, this should include reporting on the progress**

**of their multicultural plans. Reporting should be to both the Multicultural WA agency and WA Parliament**

- d) Include ongoing sustained government investment in building the capability and regulatory/accountability functions under the Act and its policies to ensure that in practice, the intent of these measures are fulfilled**

**Recommendation 6:**

**The WA Multicultural Act should include amendments to community engagement provisions of the Local Government Act 1995 and/or a new WA Government-wide policy that requires local government and WA Government agencies:**

- a) Provide robust channels of proactive, two-way communication between governments and multicultural communities**
- b) Facilitate and amplify peer-to-peer community engagement and education so that trusted networks are engaged to disseminate essential information**
- c) Partner with and have organisations that have existing relationships and trust with communities such as multicultural organisations and settlement services in the case of migrant and refugees to lead the tailoring, development and delivery of evidence-based information and resources about programs and services. These organisations are trusted to apply a co-design approach that ensures such information and resources effectively inform, include and engage people with lived experience**
- d) To be subject to reporting transparency and accountability obligations and mechanisms to support the effective implementation of this policy**

**Recommendation 7:**

**The Multicultural Act should enshrine a requirement that WA Government agencies regularly report to the Multicultural WA Agency and the WA Parliament how:**

- a) They are building their cultural responsive practice capability**
- b) That capability is applied in practice in their program and service design, delivery and relationships with multicultural communities.**

**Recommendation 8:**

**Implementation of the Multicultural Act:**

- a) Should be the primary responsibility of the public sector through the Multicultural WA agency and its commensurate portfolio**
- b) Requires the Act provide commensurate regulatory and monitoring powers to monitor WA Government agencies' adherence to the Act and policies that fall within the direct remit of that Act**
- c) Should include obligations that apply to local government, potentially in a similar manner to those related to community engagement detailed in the Local Government Act 1995 (such a requiring a Multicultural Plan).**

# Response to Discussion Paper Questions/Themes

## What should be in the WA Multicultural Act?

### 3. What principles and values do you feel are important for a Multicultural Act to include?

The Multicultural Act for WA should include the following principles that are common to other jurisdictions' Multicultural Acts namely:

- Respect for cultural identity
- Fairness and equality
- Democratic and civic participation
- Diversity, such as cultural and language diversity, as a strength — recognising that differences enrich our society socially, economically, politically and culturally

This Multicultural Act should also include other principles contained in some Acts in other jurisdictions, namely:

- Recognising Aboriginal peoples as Australia's First Peoples
- Acknowledging the contributions of all communities
- Supporting shared values and a commitment to Australia
- Building a united, inclusive, and harmonious society, in equal and inseparable importance. This should also include striving towards substantive equality as defined by the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality. This is discussed further in Question 14 and 15
- Taking action against racism and discrimination

An additional principle, a commitment to community engagement and co-design with communities, is also fundamental. Examples of the importance and success of these approaches will be explained under Question 4.

These principles are important to further clarify the purpose of the Act and accordingly inform and influence the interpretation and application of the Act in practice.

***Recommendation 1:***

***That the WA Multicultural Act adopt the following principles:***

- a) **Respect for cultural identity**
- b) **Fairness and equality**
- c) **Democratic participation**
- d) **Commitment to community engagement and co-design**
- e) **Diversity, such as cultural and language diversity, as a strength**
- f) **Recognising Aboriginal peoples as Australia's First Peoples**
- g) **Acknowledging the contributions of all communities**
- h) **Supporting shared values and a commitment to Australia by all**
- i) **The equal and inseparable importance of building a united, inclusive, and harmonious society that strives towards substantive equity**
- j) **Taking action against racism and discrimination**

## 4. How could a Multicultural Act better reflect the WA Government's commitment to Aboriginal peoples as Western Australia's First Peoples?

### Applying a multicultural Act's commitment to First Nations in practice

The WA Multicultural Act's adoption of the principles of respect for cultural identity and commitment to community engagement can enable better understanding and recognition of Aboriginal peoples as Australia's First Peoples.

An example from SSI of applying these principles is in its support of newly arrived refugee settlement. During the first month and beyond, SSI partners with local groups and First Nations organisations to offer refugee families family orientation activities, like visits to theme parks, museums, and national parks. These help newcomers learn about their new home, build friendships and learn how to navigate their surroundings.

SSI research worked with this program to create and raise more awareness of the civic and social bonds that better understanding of First Nations brings to all communities and is an example of how applying a commitment to First Nations can occur in practice.

#### **Case Study: Foundations of Belonging Research highlights common bond between refugees and Australia's First Nations peoples**

*Parallel experiences create a common bond between refugees and First Nations people living in Australia, revealed by Foundations for Belonging research from SSI and Western Sydney University.*

*This shared bond makes refugees and First Nations communities natural allies in progressing reconciliation. However, more needs to be done to provide refugees with access to opportunities for cultural and information exchange with First Nations peoples.*

*Elias Elias, an Ezidi refugee who settled in Armidale in 2018 and participated in the research, said that when he heard there was an ancient culture in Australia, he immediately wanted to learn more about it. The Ezidis are a group indigenous to the geographical region in Western Asia including parts of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran.*

*“I was told what happened to Aboriginal people in the past, and that happened to us too when ISIS attacked in 2014. That made me want to know about their history,” Mr Elias said.*

*“Through the workshop, I learnt more about how they hunted and survived and cared for the land for thousands of years.”*

*Madison Shakespeare, a Gadigal Traditional Owner and lead researcher, Western Sydney University conducted in-person workshops on Country and online focus group discussions with refugees as part of this action research.*

*She said refugees want to learn about First Nations issues, cultural practices, and histories through experiential learning on Country, not just through information included in citizenship tests or settlement orientation sessions.*

*Dr Tadgh McMahon, Head of Research and Policy at SSI said the findings indicated that the endurance of First Nations’ peoples and their cultures gave refugees a greater sense of their own cultural safety in the face of more dominant western culture in their new home.*

*“Harnessing the shared bond between refugee and First Nations communities requires action from government, settlement providers, peak bodies, and reconciliation groups to enhance avenues for education, collaboration and reconciliation,” Dr McMahon said.*

*“This includes developing more systematic engagement activities across settlement programs for refugees to strengthen their understanding of First Nations peoples particularly at the local level.”*

*“Incorporating land-based education into the ways that refugees learn about and engage with First Nations histories and issues can help to develop respect and appreciation for the lands and Country that we live on and share,” Ms Shakespeare said.*

*Foundations for Belonging over five phases, gathered refugees’ perspectives and their everyday sense of welcome and belonging as they navigate a new chapter of their lives in Australia. This iteration of research aimed to address a research gap in how refugees engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and peoples and identify ways to enhance their understanding in the future. There is potential for these benefits to also apply to other population cohorts such as senior aged, more established migrant communities through social support groups and the like.*

*SSI. (2023, September 25). [New research highlights common bond between refugees and Australia’s First Nations peoples.](#)*

## The Multicultural Act can bolster community engagement in prevention and early intervention to uplift communities, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal alike

By enshrining the principles of commitment to community engagement and co-design provided there is commensurate and sustained government investment the WA Multicultural Act can elevate and empower the WA Government’s relationship with Aboriginal communities to drive better outcomes that benefit Aboriginal people and all multicultural communities.

Examples of adopting community engagement and co-design in practice is SSI’s provision of early intervention with vulnerable children aimed at preventing the escalation of issues leading to OOH, homelessness, disability and justice systems. SSI provides early intervention through a range of forms such as through case managers working with refugees upon settlement, parenting programs, family support, community hubs, and place-based initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

Place-based initiatives are collaborative, long-term approaches to building thriving communities in a particular location and address a range of intersecting issues that draw on the strengths of the community. SSI is a partner in Logan Together which was established in 2015 and is an example of a place-based initiative focused on early childhood which is being implemented using a collective impact model. The success of Logan Together saw it receive funding in 2019

through Stronger Places, Stronger People which provided a 5-year funding agreement with the Australian and Queensland Governments.

A measure of the success of Logan Together as an established, place-based initiative is evidence of a 3.4 per cent reduction between 2015 and 2021 in developmental vulnerability in one or more domains among children in the pre-school years in Logan.<sup>2</sup> Further, since 2019, the Walk Together initiative has focused on child safety and protection in Logan.<sup>3</sup>

***Case Study: Walking together for Logan’s Children Group – an example of Queensland-based innovation in child safety and development***

*The Walking together for Logan’s Children Group (the Walk Together project) came together in 2019 when, after decades of investment in the child protection systems, it was clear that the system was not wrapping support around Logan families in ways that would best help them raise their children to thrive in life.*

*The Walk Together Project group convened and together invited Cultural Leaders, young people, families, and government and non-government partners, to sit together in Circle and on Country, to hear truths, build understandings and heal from the community’s histories.*

*Over time there was a growing acknowledgement that child safety was everyone’s responsibility. Together we identified what it would take to work differently for our children. While the collaboration started with Aboriginal communities in Logan, the opportunity for locally designed solutions began rippling out to Pasifika and CALD communities. Over time, the following changes unfolded:*

- *Child safety practice shifted under a commitment to community leadership, wherein it was understood that:*
  - *No one has the right to ‘offer authority’ to community. Country has the authority and when Country is strong, community is strong*
  - *Every child should have a cultural plan*
  - *They listen to, create a space for, and prioritise Aboriginal people always.*
  - *They preference community-led solutions owned by community*
  - *Cultural understanding is the responsibility of everyone, and both individuals and agencies need to invest in growing their cultural understanding and cultural responsiveness*
  - *Different commissioning models with Child Safety were co-designed with community who already hold the relationships with Aboriginal, Pasifika and Multicultural communities*

*Following an ongoing dialogue and building relationships involving hundreds of Logan community members, there was a strong shared understanding of what Logan’s children and families felt was most important for children to help them be happy, healthy and thriving in life.*

*To generate momentum and translate this in a way that further deepened community buy-in and engagement, a SPLASH! Event was held where this work, embodied in the community-led and robust Collective Plan, was launched.*

*This Collective Plan has been distilled into a Roadmap – organising community priorities by Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest domains across the life stages of a child. This Roadmap identifies what the community sees as key signs of success, and how to measure impact.<sup>4</sup>*

This example of place-based initiatives that adopt a community engagement and co-design approach with community members from a range of cultural backgrounds, including Aboriginal people, allowed for the identification of priorities and ways of working that empowered community members through their participation; leading to better wellbeing and safety outcomes for Aboriginal communities and multicultural communities.

What is a necessary and essential condition to making the Multicultural Act's intent a reality is sustained WA Government investment in community engagement initiatives and programs to apply these principles in practice.

## 6. What words do you think would be important to define in a Multicultural Act?

SSI recognises that in WA, the WA Multicultural Policy Framework has several definitions which should be included in the Act including:

- Culturally and linguistically Diverse (CALD)
- Culture and culturally responsive
- Diversity
- Ethnicity and race
- Institutional/systemic discrimination
- Social cohesion
- Substantive equality

The Act should include the following additional definitions of the following principles and terms:

- Community engagement
- Co-design
- Inclusion

The Act should acknowledge as well that there are a variety of approaches and frameworks that can be taken to give apply these principles which the OMI and WA government agencies have the discretion to adopt in implementing the Act and relevant policies.

### ***Recommendation 2:***

***That the Multicultural Act include definitions from the WA Multicultural Policy Framework and include additional definitions of the following principles:***

- a) ***Community engagement***
- b) ***Co-design***
- c) ***Inclusion***

## Independent multicultural advisory body

### 13. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?

The Independent Multicultural Advisory Body should include in its membership representative/s who reflect the interests of rural, regional and remote communities. Such representatives should be familiar and have experience and expertise working with multicultural communities to apply innovative solutions to shared challenges. The response to Question 20 provides an example of an innovative solution to challenges shared by rural/regional and remote and multicultural communities.

The Act may also consider adopting a model adopted in NSW<sup>5</sup> that comprises of Regional Advisory Councils of members who reflect the diversity of the local community, that in turn would advise the Independent Multicultural Advisory Body or in parallel, direct to the OMI/the WA multicultural agency on relevant matters affecting multicultural policy and practice. While there are reforms underway in Victoria,<sup>6</sup> its Multicultural Commission similarly has Regional Advisory Councils where a member of the Multicultural Advisory Board chairs a corresponding Regional Advisory Council to ensure clear lines of communication and transparency.<sup>7</sup>

#### A new WA Multicultural Affairs statutory body that acts on the advice of the independent multicultural advisory body will achieve greater impact

While SSI unequivocally supports WA establishing an independent multicultural advisory body through the Multicultural Act further machinery of government improvements are required to best realise the advice of that body and the work of the OMI.

SSI acknowledges that currently the OMI is part of the WA Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport and its remit is to work to achieve the full potential of multiculturalism in Western Australia. The OMI applies strategies that encompass the whole community, including business and industry groups, government and non-government agencies, culturally diverse communities and the wider community. Accordingly, the OMI administers various funding programs including Community Grants, the Community Languages Program and the Community Support Fund.

While this is the case, it is SSI's understanding that OMI as its currently constituted is largely focused on advisory functions and developing policies that in effect are only guidance materials. While this reflects OMI's role to encourage and support other WA Government agencies to adhere to the WA Multicultural Policy Framework, the effectiveness of this policy depends in practice largely on the commitment of those agencies. OMI's limited legal authority does not include regulatory functions which is required to more effectively influence action and drive outcomes. Furthermore, the funding it does administer is approximately \$1m in community grants per year which is too little to generate meaningful and sustained impact.<sup>8</sup>

A new Multicultural Act that more robustly and effectively reflects the aspirations and commitment of the WA Government to elevate the importance and centrality of multiculturalism to the state of WA, its instrumentalities and all its residents should include the creation of a statutory body for Multicultural Affairs, with powers and government investment in resources similar to that of Multicultural NSW<sup>9</sup> and the Victorian Multicultural Commission (which is being reformed to Multicultural Victoria).<sup>10</sup> This new Multicultural WA agency should continue to be

situated in the portfolio of a senior Cabinet level Minister to hopefully afford it the stature to influence whole-of-government adoption of priorities that strengthen multiculturalism.

**Recommendation 3:**

**The Multicultural Act for WA establish a new Multicultural WA agency that has:**

- a) **Primary and portfolio responsibility to administer the new Multicultural Act. This portfolio should be held by a senior Cabinet level minister, reflecting the importance of celebrating and embracing the richness of the State's diversity and strengthening multiculturalism**
- b) **Regulatory powers to compel action and accountability by WA Government agencies to progress and meet the goals and requirements of multiculturalism-related policies**
- c) **The ability to embed requirements of multiculturalism-related policies in all WA Government service and program contracts**
- d) **Sustained substantial government funding investment to ensure the Multicultural WA agency's effective operations and administration of programs and initiatives**

**Recommendation 4:**

**The Independent Multicultural Advisory Body should:**

- a) **Provide advice to the Multicultural WA agency, the Minister and other Ministerial portfolio holders and across WA Government departments and agencies**
- b) **Include membership of representative/s that reflect rural/regional/remote communities' needs and where possible have familiarity, experience and expertise with multicultural communities and solutions to common challenges. This approach is adopted in NSW and Victoria for example**

**AND/OR**

**The Multicultural Act establish in parallel to the Independent Ministerial Advisory Body, Regional Advisory Councils that consist of members who reflect the diversity of the local community. Regional Advisory Councils would provide advice to both the Minister and to the Multicultural WA agency, although would be encouraged to work with the Independent Multicultural Advisory Body to give joint recommendations**

## Public sector responsibilities

### **14. Do you think policies that require government authorities to respond to diverse needs (such as above), should be included in a Multicultural Act?**

### **15. If yes, what policies do you think are the most important and should be included in a Multicultural Act?**

The Multicultural Act should empower the OMI/Multicultural WA agency to drive continuous improvement and adherence to policies that are relevant to multiculturalism, for example the WA Multicultural Policy Framework,<sup>11</sup> the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality (the Substantive Equality Policy Framework)<sup>12</sup> and the Western Australian Language Services Policy.<sup>13</sup>

SSI notes that while mandatory, in practice there is little ostensible application to the principles of the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality.<sup>14</sup> It is our understanding this is due to the 2014 defunding of the unit in the Equal Opportunity Commission which supported agencies in the implementation of the Framework. To avoid this situation from continuing, the Substantive Equality Policy Framework should be included as a relevant policy in the Multicultural Act to create regulatory obligations on WA Government agencies to better respond to multicultural communities. However, this outcome requires sustained funding investment towards building the capability of WA governments agencies to meet requirements and the OMI/WA Multicultural agency's monitoring function to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

Recognising that encouraging continuous improvement and compelling better adherence occurs along a spectrum, the Act should empower the agency responsible for the Act to adopt a range of accountability mechanisms as well as require public reporting of the level of adherence by WA Government agencies to the aforementioned policies. For example, the Act should include provisions that require WA Government agencies to periodically report to OMI and at least report annually to the WA Parliament to ensure public transparency and accountability.

### **Policies should require government adopt a holistic and iterative approach to communication that goes beyond providing information and resources**

The Multicultural Act is an opportunity to review the effectiveness of community engagement provisions, requirements and practices detailed by the Local Government Act 1995, as well as those of WA Government agencies.

SSI understands that local governments are required under the Local Government Act 1995 (and associated Regulations) to adopt Strategic Community Plans that detail its approach to community engagement that ensures residents have opportunities to participate in shaping decisions. These policies focus on transparent, accessible, and inclusive methods to foster community input, particularly for strategic, long-term planning.

While it is appropriate to recognise that local government have a substantial role in engaging with the community, this accordingly should not obviate the role of state government agencies in ensuring its own communications and community engagement, especially in disasters and emergency situations, are appropriately suited to all residents, especially those that may be more vulnerable, such as multicultural communities.

In SSI's observation, government agencies tend to limit their communications to routine provision of evidence-based information and resources. Considering WA's increasingly multicultural population, and general higher community expectations of the role of government, the WA Multicultural Act should refer to policies that require more sustained and meaningful resourcing to support the delivery of a holistic suite of communication strategies to engage multicultural communities across a range of settings and channels through specialised and targeted methods that can reach different intersectional cohorts (such as age, gender, sexualities, and life stages). SSI notes that the current consideration of an Independent Multicultural Advisory Body to be a step in the right direction in providing high level advice, although OMI's function should be expanded to maintain two-way relationships with multicultural communities to ensure that concerns and initiatives are better addressed and communicated.

The COVID-19 pandemic response provides a telling example where there were significant gaps in essential communications at a national and jurisdictional level to communities. The recent Australian Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry concluded that:

*Attempts to achieve a nationally cohesive approach fell short, and communications did not meet the expectations of the public, community sector or industry ... While government communications with priority populations improved over time, communications generally relied on a universal communications approach and was therefore not simple, accessible or meaningful for all audiences.<sup>15</sup>*

The pandemic highlighted to the Australian Government (and indeed all governments) that communication and engagement channels have changed and that 'traditional' news coverage had declined in its reach, replaced by widespread distribution of news and information on social media and other digital platforms and that 'top-down' communication by experts has limitations.

In addition, messaging needed to be tailored to meet the needs of various groups within the population, including priority populations, people with specific risks and those with differing information needs which demanded a capability not easily met by governments. The Australian Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry acknowledged that efforts by community organisations were relied on, often without additional funding.<sup>16</sup>

For example, SSI's work to communicate essential information to multicultural communities during the pandemic used a range of communication channels that are appropriate and accessible to multicultural communities (e.g., Facebook and WhatsApp) alongside 'traditional' ethnic language print, radio and TV media. Provision of resources in audio, visual (e.g., pictographs, which have minimal or no text) and video formats was also crucial to reach people who are not literate in their preferred first language. In addition, SSI engaged with community leaders who were central to engagement, outreach and dissemination.

Similarly, the Australian Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry acknowledged the work undertaken by Disability Representative Organisations and the information resources they developed and tailored to people with disability, including webinars about the vaccine rollout for people with intellectual disability and their families and carers. The Inquiry also acknowledged the work undertaken by Aboriginal communities including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, services and broadcasters.

While the lessons from the Australian Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry were focused on a future pandemic, they have relevance for all initiatives undertaken by government agencies.

The lessons for communications from the Inquiry included:<sup>17</sup>

- Governments should tailor communication to different populations from the very beginning. This requires governments to prioritise two-way communications, use relationships and implement agile funding for community-led delivery

- To ensure community input, partnerships must be established to ensure communities feel heard and valued and see their views reflected in the policies enacted by government
- Communication should be shared through trusted community channels and
- Governments must proactively plan for misinformation and disinformation to occur and work with health, communication and (counter) misinformation experts to strategically address these issues

The WA Multicultural Act should include policies and provisions alongside WA Government investment to ensure these improvements occur across all agencies.

### Government agencies' information and resources will need to be tailored, developed and delivered by organisations that have relationships and trust with multicultural communities

A recent initiative delivered by SSI, The Rights Path Project,<sup>18</sup> aimed to strengthen understanding among people with disability from CALD backgrounds of their rights and the quality they should expect of NDIS service providers. It provides an example of how WA Government services and initiatives can better tailor information and resources to raise awareness.

Funded by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, The Rights Path Project worked to raise awareness among CALD people with disability drawing on their lived experiences. SSI worked closely with NDIS participants, carers and families and NDIS providers across NSW, Queensland and Victoria to consult, co-design, test and disseminate relevant and accessible in-language resources.

Some challenges identified in the consultations for The Rights Path Project which was focussed on the NDIS are also common to the information and resources needed to assist; including:

- A lack of accessible and in-language resources for CALD people with disability and carers and
- A lack of support to access services and difficulties navigating complex service systems

In addition, some cohorts, such as refugees with disability, face additional complexity accessing information and resources. SSI is the largest provider in NSW of the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), funded by the Australian Government, to newly arrived refugees. It also delivers the Settlement Engagement and Transition Supports (SETS) program, also funded by the Australian Government, to refugees and eligible family stream migrants in Queensland.

In our settlement programs, SSI sees firsthand that refugee parents in the initial settlement period have very limited capacity to engage with services and typically face several barriers including trauma, low-English proficiency and unfamiliarity with Australian service systems. In this context, organisations and services that have existing contact and relationships of trust with refugee families are an effective channel to ensure that parents of refugee children with development delay are more receptive to information and support. Accordingly, the WA Government through the Multicultural Act, should consider how it can better resource organisations that have existing relationships and trust with multicultural communities.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

***The Multicultural Act should:***

- a) Through regulations or legislative instruments such as Rules, include the WA Multicultural Policy Framework, the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality and the Western Australian Language Services Policy***
- b) Bestow upon the Multicultural WA agency responsible for administering the Act regulatory powers to require adherence and to those policies***
- c) Bestow reporting and transparency obligations on WA Government agencies. As a starting point, this should include reporting on the progress of their multicultural plans. Reporting should be to both the Multicultural WA agency and WA Parliament***
- d) Include ongoing sustained government investment in building the capability and regulatory/accountability functions under the Act and its policies to ensure that in practice, the intent of these measures are fulfilled***

***Recommendation 6:***

***The WA Multicultural Act should include amendments to community engagement provisions of the Local Government Act 1995 and/or a new WA Government-wide policy that requires local government and WA Government agencies:***

- a) Provide robust channels of proactive, two-way communication between governments and multicultural communities***
- b) Facilitate and amplify peer-to-peer community engagement and education so that trusted networks are engaged to disseminate essential information***
- c) Partner with and have organisations that have existing relationships and trust with communities such as multicultural organisations and settlement services in the case of migrant and refugees to lead the tailoring, development and delivery of evidence-based information and resources about programs and services. These organisations are trusted to apply a co-design approach that ensures such information and resources effectively inform, include and engage people with lived experience***
- d) To be subject to reporting transparency and accountability obligations and mechanisms to support the effective implementation of this policy***

## **16. Do you think the WA Government is doing enough to support CALD communities in WA? If not, what else should be done and how could this be reflected in a Multicultural Act?**

**Culturally responsive practice capability should be embedded across WA Government services, programs and workforce**

SSI welcomes the OMI Discussion Paper's recognition that WA is becoming increasingly diverse:

- Almost a third of Western Australians (32.2%) are born overseas, more than the national average (27.6%) and the highest among all States and Territories in Australia in the last 50 years<sup>19</sup>
- Almost three in five (55.6%) Western Australians have one or both parents born overseas – higher than the national average (48.2%) and
- Considering relevant ancestry responses, over one quarter of Western Australians can be classified as people from CALD backgrounds, larger compared with the figures derived from birthplace (17.5%) or language-based data (18.7%)

The WA Government can better respond to the needs of multicultural communities by building its culturally responsive practice capability at all levels.

SSI recognises that the Diverse WA training program was developed for the Western Australian Government by the Office of Multicultural Interests to improve the knowledge, skills and awareness of people working at all levels in the public sector and non-government service organisations.

OMI have reported that Diverse WA has provided cultural competency training in 2023 to 2024, equating to approximately 3,500 WA Government employees.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding that continuous improvement is an ongoing journey, this represents an overall 1.9% of the 180,000 WA Government workforce.<sup>21</sup> When compared then to WA's population, almost a third being culturally diverse, there is greater opportunity reduce this disparity.

Professional development in cultural competency, or culturally responsive practice is necessary but not sufficient to ensure that WA Government services and programs are accessible and responsive to the needs of CALD communities. While capability building is often operationalised in terms of additional training at the individual worker level, workers are often limited in their ability to effect change in the organisation where they are employed or in the service system in which they are based. An effective cultural competency framework requires changes at multiple levels such as government policy; professional standards; organisational policies and practice; and staff training and development.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, training must be accompanied by sufficient resourcing and modalities that are appropriate to worker types and service types, e.g. casually employed educators in early childhood education services.

SSI has a track record in supporting the disability sector workforce to meet this challenge, by implementing programs such as CultureReady that trained over 2,500 NDIS workers to strengthen their culturally responsive practice<sup>23</sup> and provides an example that could address workforce training gaps in within the disability sector in WA, especially considering the upcoming involvement by all states and territories in the Thriving Kids initiative to facilitate foundational supports for children with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs.

CultureReady delivered four live online modules on: fundamentals of culturally responsive practice in a disability context; working with interpreters; engaging CALD communities; and recruiting and retaining a culturally diverse workforce.

The evaluation of CultureReady found that:

- The module, Fundamentals of culturally responsive practice in a disability context, was by far the most attended session with 66% of individual training participants attending
- NDIS workers reported increased understanding and awareness of issues to consider when supporting people with disability from CALD backgrounds and

- Increased confidence in working with people with disability from CALD backgrounds across all modules, along with high levels of motivation to change practice

This confidence to change was sustained in the 3-month follow-up surveys for Modules 1, 2 and 3 – which all rated above 80%. Examples of changes to practices reported included providing access to translated documents such as service information and reports, increased use of Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National), and revising processes and policies.

The evaluation of CultureReady identified the following opportunities for improvement that the WA Government and Diversity WA could draw upon:

- Limited government and public investment in community engagement constrained the ability of the NDIS sector workers to raise awareness and support CALD communities' access to the NDIS and
- Lack of consistent coordination in knowledge sharing and capacity building of culturally responsive practice within and between the NDIA, Local Area Coordination/Partners in Community and Disability Registered services

Considering the increasing cultural and linguistical diversity of the WA population, embedding culturally responsive practice initiatives should be a key pillar of the design of all WA Government services and initiatives. This underpins the importance of ensuring the principles of the Multicultural Act refer to the commitment to community engagement and co-design. The Multicultural Act should contain provisions that require WA Government agencies report on how they are building their cultural responsive practice capability and applying that in practice in their program and service design, delivery and relationships with multicultural communities. Similar obligations should apply to outsourced and contracted service providers as well.

Embedding culturally responsive practice has real implications for services, child safety and wellbeing. The case study below details developments which align with WA Government action in this area.

### **Case study: Child safety – the importance of culturally responsive practice**

*Children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face additional challenges in child safety systems that demand tailored responses. These challenges can include disrupted social networks and loss of family supports due to migration, language difficulties, and cultural dislocation which may impact parenting in a new country. These require a tailored assessment and response that also addresses the child protection risk factors that are common across populations such as socio-economic disadvantage, parental and family mental health issues.<sup>24</sup>*

*For over the last 10 years SSI delivers home care family preservation and restoration in NSW through its Multicultural Child and Family Program. Since May 2025, this program has started in the South East Region in Queensland and is the first of its kind in that state. Over 2020-2024, SSI delivered foster care in Victoria and is currently partnering with Key Assets to deliver cultural care planning and community engagement components of out-of-home care (OOHC).*

*A recent national study led by researchers at Western Sydney University, in which SSI was a partner,<sup>25</sup> reviewed current legislation, policies and strategies across jurisdictions in Australia to understand how cultural connections are supported for non-Indigenous children from CALD backgrounds in OOHC. Notably, the analysis identified Western Australia and New South Wales as the only jurisdictions that make explicit reference to cultural care planning for non-Indigenous CALD children in OOHC, highlighting their leadership in this space.<sup>26</sup>*

SSI acknowledges the significant reforms underway in Western Australia's OOHC system,<sup>27</sup> including the Outcomes Framework that elevates cultural connection, cultural safety and stable, needs-driven care as core priorities for children.<sup>28</sup> These reforms are embedded within the State's broader shift toward a trauma-informed, culturally safe, and community-partnered service system, with a strong emphasis on ensuring children's physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs are met.

However, for child protection systems to be genuinely safe and equitable, they must also be culturally responsive in policy, organisational design and everyday child protection practice.<sup>29</sup> The evidence shows that effective engagement with CALD children and families requires deeper consideration of ethnicity, faith, language and settlement experiences, and must include collaboration with interpreters, cultural leaders, bicultural workers and community-based supports. This is consistent with the Multicultural Child & Family Program (MCFP) Culturally Responsive Practice Approach, which emphasises culturally informed decision-making, first-language communication, community partnerships and the integration of cultural identity into case planning and permanency pathways.

The ARC-linked child-centred evidence project led by Western Sydney University reinforces these principles, demonstrating that policy and practice innovation must be grounded in robust, child-centred data that captures the lived experiences, aspirations and cultural needs of children.<sup>30</sup> This includes developing evidence frameworks that elevate the voices of children—especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds—in decisions that affect their safety, identity and wellbeing.

The S.E.L.F. Framework (Settlement, Ethnicity, Language, Faith) provides an additional practice lens for understanding and strengthening cultural identity for CALD children in OOHC.<sup>31</sup> The framework guides practitioners to critically reflect on cultural assumptions, gather meaningful cultural information from children and families, and embed culturally sustaining practices in assessment, placement and restoration work.

SSI welcomes the WA Government's State-wide rollout of the CALD Community Carer Program,<sup>32</sup> following its successful trials in the Mirrabooka and Pilbara districts. The expansion of this program—designed to engage community carers from cultural groups including Hazara, Burundian, Myanmar, South Sudanese, Somali and Kenyan communities—demonstrates a strong government commitment to improving cultural continuity, relational safety and stability for CALD children and young people in care. This initiative represents a best-practice example of culturally responsive care in action and aligns closely with national and international evidence on the importance of cultural belonging for children's long-term wellbeing.

### **Recommendation 7:**

**The Multicultural Act should enshrine a requirement that WA Government agencies regularly report to the Multicultural WA Agency and the WA Parliament how:**

- a) They are building their cultural responsive practice capability**
- b) That capability is applied in practice in their program and service design, delivery and relationships with multicultural communities**

## 17. What sectors do you think should be responsible for implementing a Multicultural Act (for example, public sector, local government)?

Responsibility should be appropriately allocated across the Multicultural WA agency, WA Government agencies and local government

The public sector through the new Multicultural agency and its commensurate portfolio department should have primary responsibility for implementing the Multicultural Act. This however is not to avoid placing responsibility on local government to apply and demonstrate its application of the principles of the Act, alongside state policies relevant to multiculturalism such as the WA Multicultural Policy Framework, Policy Framework for Substantive Equality and Western Australian Language Services Policy.

As outlined in previous responses, certain obligations within the Multicultural Act, including specific policies referred to by the Act, would apply to WA Government agencies. The Multicultural Act would need to confer powers to enable the Multicultural WA agency to monitor and procedure reporting on WA Government agencies' level of adherence with its obligations.

Furthermore, OMI should be commended for having conducted analysis on the level of diversity across WA, including at the LGA level.<sup>33</sup> These insights are crucial in guiding resource allocation and prioritisation to ensure the needs of diverse communities are better met. Furthermore, obligations to support principles and requirements of the Multicultural Act, should be extended to local government, potentially in a manner similar to those related to community engagement detailed in the Local Government Act 1995 (such as requiring among other things, the adoption of a Multicultural Plan similar to a Community Engagement Plan).

### ***Recommendation 8:***

#### ***Implementation of the Multicultural Act:***

- a) ***Should be the primary responsibility of the public sector through the Multicultural WA agency and its commensurate portfolio***
- b) ***Requires the Act provide commensurate regulatory and monitoring powers to monitor WA Government agencies' adherence to the Act and policies that fall within the direct remit of that Act***
- c) ***Should include obligations that apply to local government, potentially in a similar manner to those related to community engagement detailed in the Local Government Act 1995 (such a requiring a Multicultural Plan)***

## Regional communities

### 20. How could a Multicultural Act ensure the issues of rural, regional and remote communities are considered?

The Independent Multicultural Advisory Body should include member/s who represent and have a record of success with rural, regional remote and multicultural communities

Building further on the response to Questions 13, the Independent Multicultural Advisory body should include representation of the issues and interests of rural, regional and remote communities including a record of success working with multicultural communities to develop innovative solutions to mutual challenges.

One major challenge is chronic workforce shortages experienced in regional Australia that span local government, healthcare, trades, engineering, education and community services. Jobs and Skills Australia's 2023 Annual Jobs and Skills Report found that, "skill shortages were more pronounced in regional areas ... [and] the likelihood of employers reporting recruitment challenges increased in proportion to the remoteness of their location".<sup>34</sup> The 2025 Report continues this trend, stating that, "Although recruitment difficulty appears to be showing some sign of easing, recruitment difficulties ... continues to remain one of the greatest challenges for regional employers".<sup>35</sup> Outside major centres, no consistent, scalable or locally adapted workforce retention infrastructure exists. Key challenges to retaining a skilled workforce in the regions include lack of structured support to support newcomers and especially their families to form community connections; "one-size-fits-all" policy being insufficiently responsive to diverse regional contexts; and employers bearing the cost of repeated recruitment without retention outcomes. The Review of the Migration System (the Parkinson review) recognises factors such as infrastructure, employment opportunities, housing and access to services are likely to be more important in attracting and retaining people in regional areas than the provision of regionally-focused visa pathways.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the lack of specialised services tailored to the needs of newcomers (such as specialised health services, interpreter services) and lack of additional support to integrate into the local labour market<sup>37</sup> may create barriers to regional settlement.<sup>38</sup>

The Independent Multicultural Advisory Body should therefore include a member can have experience and familiarity with innovative ways to address challenges experienced by regional areas. One example of an innovative response is SSI's STAY Solution:

#### **Case Study: Unlocking regional migration through the STAY solution – A flexible, subsidised regional employment retention model**

*The risks associated with regional retention such as community readiness, housing constraints, employer engagement variability, and the complexity of newcomer settlement are real but manageable. For example, SSI's STAY solution actively mitigates these challenges through locally tailored design, strong partnerships with local councils and community and faith organisations, a structured 1:1 Welcome Ambassador program and partner employment support, and a contingency fund to address urgent needs. Continuous safeguarding audits, data-driven progress tracking, and regular employer and newcomer check-ins further ensure the model remains responsive and compliant. With these mechanisms in place, the risks are low relative to the substantial economic and social returns delivered to regional communities.*

*The STAY Solution's 90%+ retention rate delivers significant economic and social benefits to regional Australia by strengthening workforce stability, productivity and community cohesion. At just \$5,500 per newcomer in government co-investment, the STAY solution is a national, scalable*

*model that is meaningfully adaptable and responsive to each region it supports. To date, the STAY solution has made over 90 successful regional placements across 25+ LGAs nationally.*

*Government investment is needed to bridge the gap between migration settings and real retention in regional Australia by enabling newcomers to establish lives, not just jobs.*

### **Successful structured relocation and retention to the Shire of Gnowangerup, Western Australia**

*The Shire of Gnowangerup provides a practical Western Australian example of how structured relocation and settlement support provided by the STAY Solution converts attraction of skilled workers into retention.*

*Within a defined period, the Shire supported the relocation of:*

- *One family with a school aged child*
- *Two professional couples*
- *One senior executive*

*All accommodation was supplied by Council. A structured Welcome Ambassador program was activated locally through the Gnowangerup Community Resource Centre to formalise community integration.*

### **Whole-of-Family Retention**

#### **Sudarshan Ghimire, Technical Officer**

*Regional workforce retention depends on more than just employment placement. It depends on whether families can establish sustainable lives in-region.*

*When Sudarshan Ghimire relocated to Gnowangerup to take up a Technical Officer role, his settlement was staged to manage risk and support long-term retention outcomes.*

*Initially relocating alone, Sudarshan was supported through council-supplied accommodation and a structured local orientation process facilitated under the STAY model. Following his arrival, the local Welcome Ambassador program, delivered in partnership with the Gnowangerup Community Resource Centre, was activated to support integration and community connection.*

*Three months later, Sudarshan's wife and daughter joined him and transitioned into family accommodation supplied by council.*

*Key retention enablers included:*

- *Immediate access to secure council-supplied housing*
- *Structured introduction to a Welcome Ambassador*
- *Coordinated school enrolment support*
- *Secondary earner pathway assistance through the Community Resource Centre*
- *Ongoing relationship-based check-ins*

*Outcomes to date indicate strong early retention markers:*

- *The family has established stable housing*
- *The daughter is settling in school and socially integrated*

- Mrs Ghimire is studying and exploring local aged care employment pathways
- The family has formed sustained community connections

Welcome Ambassador Stacey Russell noted:

*“Sudarshan and his family are fitting in well. The daughter is doing well at school, Mrs Ghimire is studying, and the CRC (Community Resource Centre) is assisting her with work relating to aged care. I have seen them create new connections in the community.”*

*This case demonstrates that structured, locally embedded Welcome Ambassador models function as retention infrastructure. They reduce settlement friction, support family integration and materially lower the likelihood of secondary migration to metropolitan centres.*

### **Executive retention is key to risk mitigation, governance and service continuity and community confidence**

#### **Kenneth Smith (pseudonym), Executive role**

*Executive placements in regional Australia carry elevated organisational and reputational risk. Turnover at this level can disrupt continuity of governance, service delivery and potentially impact community confidence. Relocation support in practice therefore functions as essential risk mitigation infrastructure.*

*Kenneth Smith (pseudonym) relocated 1,404 km to Gnowangerup to take up an Executive role. The relocation involved significant logistical complexity, including the transport of specialised equipment such as a large kiln. This required staged travel planning to manage the distance safely and efficiently.*

*Under the structured relocation STAY solution, the following supports were coordinated:*

- Complex multi-component removalist logistics
- Transitional accommodation planning to break up the 1,404 km journey
- Council-supplied housing secured prior to arrival
- Introduction to the Welcome Ambassador program
- Early-stage relationship check-ins

*The Welcome Ambassador program, delivered locally through the Community Resource Centre, provided formalised community connection and integration support. This ensured that settlement was not reliant on informal networks but embedded within a facilitated model.*

*From his first week in town, Kenneth reported feeling aligned with the community, reflecting his background in small regional towns. Early connection to local leadership and community infrastructure reduced settlement friction and accelerated integration.*

Welcome Ambassador Stacey Russell observed:

*“Kennet has a real passion for small towns and is keen to make a positive difference. He has a wealth of wisdom that will be a great asset to our community.”*

*This case demonstrates that structured relocation and Welcome Ambassador integration are not ancillary supports. They are core risk management mechanisms that protect public investment in regional leadership roles.*

*In the context of national skills shortages and regional workforce constraints, stabilising senior appointments is critical to sustaining long-term economic and community outcomes.*

*Executive retention is a regional workforce investment multiplier. When senior leadership stabilises, regions benefit from:*

- *Improved infrastructure and asset management oversight*
- *Stronger organisational governance*
- *Reduced recruitment and onboarding costs*
- *Increased investor and community confidence*

*These relocations demonstrate that retention is not incidental. It is system-enabled and facilitated through the STAY solution.*

### **Case Study: Place-based community engagement initiatives' potential to support settlement of newcomers in regional Australia**

*SSI has experience in supporting refugee settlement in regional Australia, namely Armidale NSW. Key to the success of such settlement are place-based community engagement initiatives that provide a platform to recognise the shared aspirations of the local regional community and newcomers, while also creating a welcoming and socially inclusive environment. SSI found growing acceptance of refugee settlement in our joint research with the University of New England monitoring community attitudes towards refugee resettlement in Armidale, which is likely due to SSI's strong investment in community engagement when refugees were first settled there. These intentional strategies and coordination help break down language and cultural barriers by ensuring that people have the chance to get involved in community activities and make new connections. SSI's delivery of self-funded community engagement initiatives, such as those in Armidale, foster the inclusion of newcomers in all aspects of social, economic and community life, not just exclusive to refugees.*

*While recognising that refugee settlement is not within the purview of state governments, this is an opportunity for the WA government to close the gap in funding innovative approaches that more holistically engaging and managing relationships with the local community, coordinating volunteers or developing dialogue between stakeholders that would benefit all newcomers, whether they are skilled migrants from overseas or interstate, or refugees.*

**Authorised by:** Sonia Vignjevic, General Manager Growth & Stakeholder Relations

**Contact:** Tri Nguyen, Social Policy Lead, [tringuyen@ssi.org.au](mailto:tringuyen@ssi.org.au)

**Date:** 13 February 2026

### **References**

---

<sup>1</sup> Social Ventures Australia. (2020). *Keeping families together through COVID-19: the strengthened case for early intervention in the child protection and out-of-home care system in Victoria*. Sydney: SVA Consulting.

- <sup>2</sup> Gaetches, L., Preston, C., & Putnis, A., for Equity Economics and Development Partners. (2023). *Where are we? Place-based approaches to tackling community challenges in Australia*. Paul Ramsay Foundation. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61b14c4abbc81a1543f55180/t/649cd9e49a00fc53bcbaa3f/1688001012197/P RF+EE+Where+Are+We+2023+V4+FINAL.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Logan Together. (n.d.a.). *Walking together for Logan's Children*. Retrieved from [https://www.logantogether.org.au/files/uqgd/7db6a6\\_91aa001d643e41d489aadb148ead3ddf.pdf](https://www.logantogether.org.au/files/uqgd/7db6a6_91aa001d643e41d489aadb148ead3ddf.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Logan Together. (n.d.b.). *Our journey - Getting to our Roadmap*. Retrieved from <https://www.logantogether.org.au/roadmap>
- <sup>5</sup> Government of Western Australia Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI). (2025a). *Research and Findings Report: Multicultural Legislation in Australia. A Cross-Jurisdictional Review*. Retrieved from [https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/wa-multicultural-act-development/wa-multicultural-act-research-and-findings-report.pdf?sfvrsn=da2ee6e\\_1](https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/wa-multicultural-act-development/wa-multicultural-act-research-and-findings-report.pdf?sfvrsn=da2ee6e_1)
- <sup>6</sup> Premier of Victoria, Jacinta Allan (MP). (2025, September 11). A Multicultural Victoria is a United Victoria. Retrieved from <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/multicultural-victoria-united-victoria>
- <sup>7</sup> Victorian Multicultural Commission. (2025, September 15). *VMC Regional Advisory Councils*. Retrieved from <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/vmc-regional-advisory-councils>
- <sup>8</sup> OMI. (2025b). *Community Grants Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/funding/community-grants-program/bf029114-3c47-4ca2-b020-3542b4eb0a82>
- <sup>9</sup> Multicultural NSW. (2026). *About us*. Retrieved from <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/about-us/>
- <sup>10</sup> Premier of Victoria (2025, September 11). Op. cit.
- <sup>11</sup> OMI. (2022). *West Australian Multicultural Policy Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/resources-and-statistics/publications/publication/wa-multicultural-policy-framework>
- <sup>12</sup> Government of Western Australia Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC). (2024). *Policy Framework for Substantive Equality*. Retrieved from [https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-05/policy\\_framework\\_se\\_march\\_2024.pdf](https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-05/policy_framework_se_march_2024.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> OMI. (2020). *WA Language Services Policy 2020*. retrieved from <https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/resources-and-statistics/publications/publication/language-services-policy-2020>
- <sup>14</sup> EOC. (2023). *Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=8fbc3c48-0996-46e9-8685-e0fd0ed123eb&subId=744681>
- <sup>15</sup> Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (2024). *COVID-19 Response Inquiry Summary: Lessons for the Next Crisis*. Retrieved from <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/covid-19-response-inquiry-summary-report-lessons-next-crisis/actions-improve-australias-pandemic-preparedness-and-response/communication>
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> SSI. (n.d.a). *The Rights Path Project: Understand your rights as an NDIS participant and how to give feedback*. Retrieved from <https://www.ssi.org.au/our-services/disability/the-rights-path-project/>
- <sup>19</sup> Western Australia Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries - Office of Multicultural Interests. (2023). *Census 2021 Highlights: Western Australia's Changing Population And Cultural Diversity*. Retrieved from [https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/statistics/022434omi-census-highlight-report-feb23---web-ready-2-\(1\).pdf?sfvrsn=3913e4d8\\_0](https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/statistics/022434omi-census-highlight-report-feb23---web-ready-2-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=3913e4d8_0)
- <sup>20</sup> OMI. (2025c). *Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework Implementation Report May 2025*. Retrieved from [https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/wampf-progress-report/western-australian-multicultural-policy-framework-implementation-report-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=fdea3b35\\_1](https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/wampf-progress-report/western-australian-multicultural-policy-framework-implementation-report-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=fdea3b35_1)
- <sup>21</sup> Government of Western Australia Public Sector Commission. (2025). *State of the WA Government Sector Workforce 2024-25*. Retrieved from [https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tabledpapers.nsf/displaypaper/4210528a0d4d35192e6b36b048258d090005f9fe/\\$file/tp+528+\(2025\).pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tabledpapers.nsf/displaypaper/4210528a0d4d35192e6b36b048258d090005f9fe/$file/tp+528+(2025).pdf)
- <sup>22</sup> NHMRC (2006). Op cit.
- <sup>23</sup> Michelle Dodd Consulting. (2021). *CultureReady Project Evaluation Report*. Retrieved from [https://www.ssi.org.au/images/Misc/Summary\\_of\\_evaluation\\_CultureReady\\_updated.pdf](https://www.ssi.org.au/images/Misc/Summary_of_evaluation_CultureReady_updated.pdf)
- <sup>24</sup> Sawrikar, P. (2009). Op. cit.
- <sup>25</sup> Australian Research Council. Grant LP200100428 — Western Sydney University. Retrieved from <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/NCGP/Web/Grant/Grant/LP200100428>
- <sup>26</sup> Grace, R., Mitchell, M., Wright, A. C., Karatasas, K., Hadley, F., Ravulo, J., ... & Waniganayake, M. (2025). 'The Right to Cultural Connection for Children in Out-of-Home Care: Does Australian Policy and Practice Adequately Support Cultural Identity for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children?' *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. 0:1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.70008>; Government of Western Australia Department of Communities. (2026). *Out-of-Home Care Services*. Retrieved from <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/out-of-home-care-services>

- 
- <sup>27</sup> Stojkovski, J. (MP). (2026, January 28). *Reform strengthens outcomes for children in Out of Home Care*. Retrieved from <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook%20Labor%20Government/Reform-strengthens-outcomes-for-children-in-Out-of-Home-Care-20260128>.
- <sup>28</sup> Government of Western Australia Department of Communities. (2025). *WA Out of Home Care (OOHC) Outcomes Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.wa.gov.au/media/158566/download?inline>
- <sup>29</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2006) *Cultural competency in health: A guide for policy, partnerships and participation*. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/cultural-competencyhealth>
- <sup>30</sup> Western Sydney University. (2026). *ARC Linkage Project: Child-centred evidence to drive meaningful social change for children*. Retrieved from <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/young-and-resilient/projects/current-projects/child-centred-evidence-to-drive-meaningful-social-change-for-children>
- <sup>31</sup> Karatasa, K., Noujaim, G., Wright, A. C., & Chapman, J. (2024). 'The S.E.L.F. Framework for keeping children connected to their culture in Out-of-Home-Care'. *Australian Social Work*. 77(4), 567–582. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2024.2385982>
- <sup>32</sup> Stojkovski, J. (MP). (2025, August 18). *Innovative multicultural care program expanded State-wide*. Retrieved from <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook%20Labor%20Government/Innovative-multicultural-care-program-expanded-State-wide-20250818>
- <sup>33</sup> OMI. (2025). *Western Australian multicultural policy framework implementation report 2023–24*. Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport, Government of Western Australia.
- <sup>34</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia. (2023). *Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap: Annual Jobs and Skills Report 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/towards-national-jobs-and-skills-roadmap>, p. 14.
- <sup>35</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia. (2025). *Connecting for impact - The Annual Jobs and Skills Report 2025*. Retrieved from <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/19867/jobs-and-skills-report-2025/3550/connecting-impact-jobs-and-skills-report-2025/docx>
- <sup>36</sup> Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. (2023). *Review of the Migration System Final Report*. Australian Government. Retrieved from <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-migration-system-final-report.pdf>
- <sup>37</sup> Musoni, E. (2019). *Understanding regional settlement in Australia: Key learnings from past experiences*. Canberra: Regional Australian Institute.
- <sup>38</sup> ARTD Consultants/SSI. (2021). *Summary of the Evaluation of the HSP In Armidale*. Sydney: SSI; van Kooy, J., Wickes, R., & Ali, A. (2019). *Welcoming Regions*. Monash University/Welcoming Cities.