



Multicultural  
NSW

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT

2019-2020



NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT

This publication is freely available for reproduction or sharing, except for commercial purposes, with acknowledgement of Multicultural NSW as its author.

This report is available at:  
[multicultural.nsw.gov.au/publications](http://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/publications)

Any enquiries about this publication should be made to:

Multicultural NSW  
Level 8, 56 Station St East  
Parramatta NSW 2150

P.O. Box 618  
Parramatta NSW 2124

T: 02 8255 6767



# Table of Contents

<b>SUBMISSION LETTER FROM JOSEPH LA POSTA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>STATEMENT FROM THE MNSW ADVISORY BOARD</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE STATE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN NSW 2019-20</b>	<b>7</b>
We are resilient: the people of NSW unite throughout a tough year	<b>7</b>
Assessing the health of social cohesion in a pandemic: reflections on the findings of the 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion survey	<b>15</b>
Monitoring issues impacting on community harmony: 2020 Report from the NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) Committee	<b>20</b>
<b>GOOD PRACTICE IN MULTICULTURAL POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY</b>	<b>26</b>
Putting the Multicultural Principles into practice	<b>26</b>
The Multicultural Principles are the policy of the state	<b>27</b>
Cultivating Cultural Competence	<b>28</b>
A NSW public sector that reflects the community it serves	<b>29</b>
Designated MPSP Agencies: 2019-20 report highlights	<b>31</b>
Endnotes	<b>36</b>



# Submission Letter



Level 8,  
56 Station Street East  
Parramatta NSW 2150

---

P.O. Box 618,  
Parramatta NSW 2124

---

P: 02 8255 6767  
F: 02 8255 6868  
TTY: 02 8255 6758

---

ABN 79 863 510 875

To whom it may concern,

It is a pleasure to submit the 2019-20 Community Relations Report on behalf of Multicultural NSW for the Parliament of New South Wales.

I submit this report under section 14 of the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* (the Act), which requires, for each financial year, Multicultural NSW to prepare for Parliament:

- a report on the state of community relations in NSW as affected by cultural diversity;
- an assessment of the effectiveness of public authorities in observing the Multicultural Principles in the conduct of their affairs.

This report reaffirms the commitment of Multicultural NSW to advocate for the Multicultural Principles enshrined in section 3 of the Act, across the NSW public sector and in the community we serve.

In essence, the Multicultural Principles enshrined in the Act call on public authorities and the people of NSW to:

- share democratic values, governed by the rule of law, and promote a unified commitment to Australia;
- accept and value the fact that NSW is a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse society;
- respect our democratic freedoms to practice our cultural and religious traditions and speak our languages, within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language;
- ensure NSW government programs and services, as well as opportunities to participate in public life, are accessible by everyone irrespective of their cultural, linguistic or religious heritage;
- promote and maximise the value of cultural diversity for the social and economic benefit of NSW.

The Multicultural Principles lay the foundations for a cohesive multicultural society. Cohesive societies are also more resilient societies in the face of adversity and crisis. Our resilience was tested in 2019-20: an unprecedented year filled with challenges, including an unrelenting drought, floods, a devastating summer bushfire season and a one-in-100-year pandemic that profoundly affected the way we live our lives and come together as a community.

As this report affirms, people in our State proved to be remarkably resilient and cohesive, with communities coming together across the multicultural spectrum of our society to help each other in times of need.

Multicultural NSW recognises that the factors contributing to and affecting our cohesive multicultural society are many and complex. The Agency has therefore drawn on data, information and insights from a range of reliable sources in producing this report.

As in previous years, the 2019-20 Community Relations Report draws on the latest independent findings of the annual Mapping Social Cohesion surveys by the Scanlon Foundation and the insights and experiences of NSW agencies through their participation in the whole-of-NSW Government Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) and Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP).

This year's report also draws on insights derived from an intensive program of community and stakeholder engagement that Multicultural NSW led across the State, in partnership with NSW Health and other agencies, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This involved more than 120 online forums with regional networks, multi-faith religious leaders, peak multicultural bodies, consular officials, community groups, and the humanitarian and settlement sector. These helped to identify the impacts of the pandemic on communities and community harmony and to empower communities with the most up-to-date public health advice and messaging. Combined, these forums involved more than 4,000 individual engagements.

I thank all the community members, religious leaders, agencies and organisations who contributed to these consultations. Your commitment to the Multicultural Principles have helped to make NSW into the strong, resilient and cohesive society that it has proven to be throughout a tough and tumultuous year.

In accordance with section 6 of the Act, I confirm that the contents of this report reflect the independent advice of Multicultural NSW.

Yours sincerely



**Joseph La Posta**

Chief Executive Officer  
Multicultural NSW



# Statement from the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board

The Multicultural NSW Advisory Board is an independent body established under the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*. Drawing on the diverse skills and insights of our members, the Advisory Board assists Multicultural NSW to achieve its legislated objectives by promoting community harmony and the Multicultural Principles. We advise Multicultural NSW and the Minister for Multiculturalism on a range of issues relating to these objectives and the Agency's strategic directions.

We bring experience and expertise on issues relating to cultural diversity from a range of professional, academic and community-based fields of practice. These include medicine, law, education, linguistics, interpreting and translation, community languages, business and marketing, diversity and inclusion, arts and culture, sports, migration and settlement and, importantly, indigenous affairs. Our lived experiences as community leaders and multicultural advocates help to guide and inform the work of Multicultural NSW across its various responsibilities.

In June 2020, the Advisory Board welcomed three new members: Grace Ho, Omer Incekara, and Esther Adeyinka (Youth Member). An important feature of the Board is the inclusion of young people in our membership. Two positions are reserved for young people who were under the age of 25 at the time of their appointment. We welcome Esther's appointment as our new Youth Member and the fresh perspectives she brings.

Throughout the year, Advisory Board members represent Multicultural NSW, engage communities and stakeholders and advocate for cultural diversity at statewide forums.

Among our various responsibilities, Advisory Board members are privileged to serve as chairs of the Multicultural NSW Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the activation of online RACs created new opportunities to engage more regional stakeholders more frequently. This increased engagement helped to ensure Multicultural NSW and the NSW Government were kept abreast of issues impacting communities across the state.

Advisory Board members also serve on the Multicultural NSW grants program assessment committee. Unfortunately, public health restrictions prevented us from supporting many of the usual events and festivals that celebrate cultural diversity each year. However, we were proud that Multicultural NSW could divert grant funding to provide emergency relief for grassroots groups supporting temporary visa holders, isolated seniors and other vulnerable people in our community. This initiative was very well received and showed just how important grassroots work is to the wellbeing of our communities.

In our personal capacity as community leaders, several Advisory Board members were actively involved in COVID relief on the ground. We recognise that much of the community-led effort to promote community wellbeing happens independently of government funding programs, and that multiculturalism truly thrives because of the enormous human investment made through volunteering and community spirit. This spirit was clearly on display in a year marked by drought, floods, bushfires and a global pandemic.

The pandemic also highlighted the critical importance of a culturally competent public service. We need a public service that speaks the languages of its customers and plans for service delivery with cultural diversity at the centre of its business model, not as an afterthought. Through its immense output of translation work and multicultural engagement to support public health priorities this year, Multicultural NSW clearly demonstrated its value to the NSW Government.

The 2019-20 Community Relations Report affirms that the people of NSW are resilient and cohesive. It also highlights areas that demand ongoing attention to ensure we remain resilient and cohesive into the future. We hope this report will help guide this work in the year ahead.

# Our Advisory Board



**Dr G.K (Hari) Harinath OAM**  
**Chairperson**  
MB BS, DT M&H (Syd)  
Appointed 1 July 2013  
Appointment expires 5 August 2021



**Joseph La Posta**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
B App Sci (Town Planning) RMIT



**Simon Chan**  
B.Arch (Hons.) B.Sc.(Arch)  
Appointed 31 January 2018  
Appointment expires 31 January 2021



**Prof Sandra Hale**  
BA, Dip.Ed., M.App.Ling., PhD, NAATI  
Appointed 1 August 2015  
Appointment expires 5 August 2021



**Kyung (Kenneth) Hong**  
B.Laws (Bond)  
Appointed 15 Sept 2014  
Appointment expires 25 October 2020



**Dai Le**  
B.Arts Political Science (Macquarie)  
Appointed 1 Aug 2012  
LOA Dates  
Appointment expires 5 August 2021



**Cav. Felice Montrone OAM**  
Appointed 1 Dec 2012  
Appointment expires 5 August 2021



**Margaret Piper AM**  
B.Ed (Hons) M.Ed (Syd)  
Appointed 15 Sept 2014  
Appointment expires 25 October 2020



**Sonia Sadiq Gandhi**  
M.Com  
Appointed 31 January 2018  
Appointment expires 31 January 2021



**Devpaal Singh**  
Youth Member  
Civil Engineering & Law student (Syd)  
Appointed 15 Sept 2014  
Appointment expires 25 October 2020



**Cristina Talacko**  
Appointed 31 January 2018  
Appointment expires 31 January 2021



**Albert Vella**  
Appointed 31 January 2018  
Appointment expires 31 January 2021



**Steve Widders**  
Appointed 15 Sept 2014  
Appointment expires 25 October 2020



**Grace Ho - NEW MEMBER**  
Appointed 17 June 2020  
Appointment expires 26 May 2023



**Omer Incekara - NEW MEMBER**  
Appointed 17 June 2020  
Appointment expires 26 May 2023



**Esther Adeyinka - NEW MEMBER**  
Appointed 17 June 2020  
Appointment expires 26 May 2023



# Acknowledgements

- Multicultural NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands of NSW and pays respect to Indigenous leaders past, present and emerging.
- With the pandemic's onset, Multicultural NSW activated its Religious Communities Forum online. In normal times, this peak interfaith forum meets four times a year. In 2020, Multicultural NSW convened over 40 online engagement forums involving more than 150 religious leaders from more than 100 faith groups. These provided key insights into the ways faith leaders and religious charities were addressing the spiritual, psycho-social and welfare needs of communities during this difficult time.
- Multicultural NSW also activated its Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) network online, increasing the reach and the frequency of the engagements. More than 250 regional stakeholders participated in over 50 online forums through 2020, providing valued insight into the impact of the pandemic on communities across the State. A regional round-up of issues identified through these RAC consultations is included in this report.
- From March 2020, Multicultural NSW and the NSW Coordinator General for Settlement, Professor Peter Shergold AC, held 16 meetings with leaders from the humanitarian and settlement sector to identify priority issues for refugees, asylum seekers and temporary visa holders. This included monthly meetings of the Joint Partnership Working Group. The sector truly stepped up to support some of the most vulnerable people in our community.
- Under the umbrella of the Leaders in Cultural Diversity (LinCD) program, peak multicultural bodies the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW, Multicultural Communities Council of the Illawarra, Hunter Multicultural Council, Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga and the Federation of Community Language Schools met 11 times in 2020 to advise Multicultural NSW and the Acting Minister for Multiculturalism on issues impacting migrant communities during the pandemic and strategies to support them.
- Multicultural NSW has especially valued its partnership with NSW Health and the Department of Customer Service throughout the pandemic. Collaboration across our three agencies meant that cultural, linguistic and religious diversity was recognised as essential to public health communications and engagement. Special mention must be made of Dr Jan Fizzell, Senior Medical Adviser from the Public Health Response Branch of NSW Health, who attended many community forums hosted by Multicultural NSW through the year and whose collaboration and responsiveness contributed directly to the effectiveness of these engagements.
- The NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) Committee met seven times in 2020 to identify, assess, monitor, and share information and resources about the community harmony impacts of COVID-19. The Committee examined a range of community concerns, including experiences of racism during the pandemic. Committee members also participated in forums to raise community awareness of reporting mechanisms and support services. The 2020 activity statement from the COMPLAN Committee is included in this report.
- The Department of Education, Ministry of Health, iCare, NSW Fair Trading, Legal Aid NSW, TAFE NSW and Transport for NSW all submitted reports for 2019-20 under the Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP). This report highlights good practice in multicultural service delivery and planning from these reports.
- The NSW Government's Workforce Profile Report 2020 by the NSW Public Service Commission provides an insight into cultural diversity in the NSW public sector, the largest employer in Australia.
- As in previous years, the 2019-20 Community Relations Report draws on the latest findings of the annual Mapping Social Cohesion surveys by the Scanlon Foundation. The 2020 Scanlon report provides unique independent insights into levels on social cohesion in Australia during the COVID-19 crisis. The reflections



we offer on these findings are those of Multicultural NSW.

- The committed members of the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board continue to provide the CEO and staff of Multicultural NSW with invaluable advice and expertise on all things related to cultural diversity. They also stood up to support communities through a challenging year.

- The Acting Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. Dr Geoff Lee MP, lead the Agency's intensive schedule of online community and stakeholder engagement during COVID-19. These engagements provide many of the insights presented in this year's report. The contents of this report nevertheless reflect the independent advice of Multicultural NSW.

Multicultural NSW thanks all of the agencies, organisations, researchers and community members who made a contribution to the 2019-20 Community Relations Report.



# THE STATE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES 2019-20

## We are resilient: the people of NSW unite throughout a tough year

Socially cohesive communities are more resilient communities in the face of adversity and crisis.<sup>1</sup> Whether we are dealing with bushfires, floods, pandemics or terrorism, all the evidence shows that more connected communities are more resilient and recover more quickly from all manner of adversity.

Our resilience was tested in 2019-2020<sup>2</sup>: an unprecedented year filled with challenges, including drought, floods, a devastating summer bushfire season and a global pandemic that profoundly affected the way we live our lives and come together as a community. This report affirms that the people of NSW proved to be remarkably resilient and cohesive.

In the face of adversity, the strength of our community spirit was displayed time and time again as people came together across cultural and religious differences to help each other in times of need. Grassroots groups across the multicultural spectrum stepped up to support bushfire-affected regions and deliver emergency relief to vulnerable cohorts during the pandemic.

As we saw, and as this report confirms, adversity can often bring out the best in people. Unfortunately, crises also present challenges. There will always be fringe elements in a society who seek to exploit times of crisis to promote divisiveness and discord. Government agencies and community leaders remained vigilant to the threat of racism and conspiracy theories seeking to undermine trust and community harmony. This report acknowledges these concerns and

efforts to address them. It also recognises that the strength of our social cohesion will always overcome any attempt to threaten it.

## Standing in solidarity with drought and bushfire affected communities

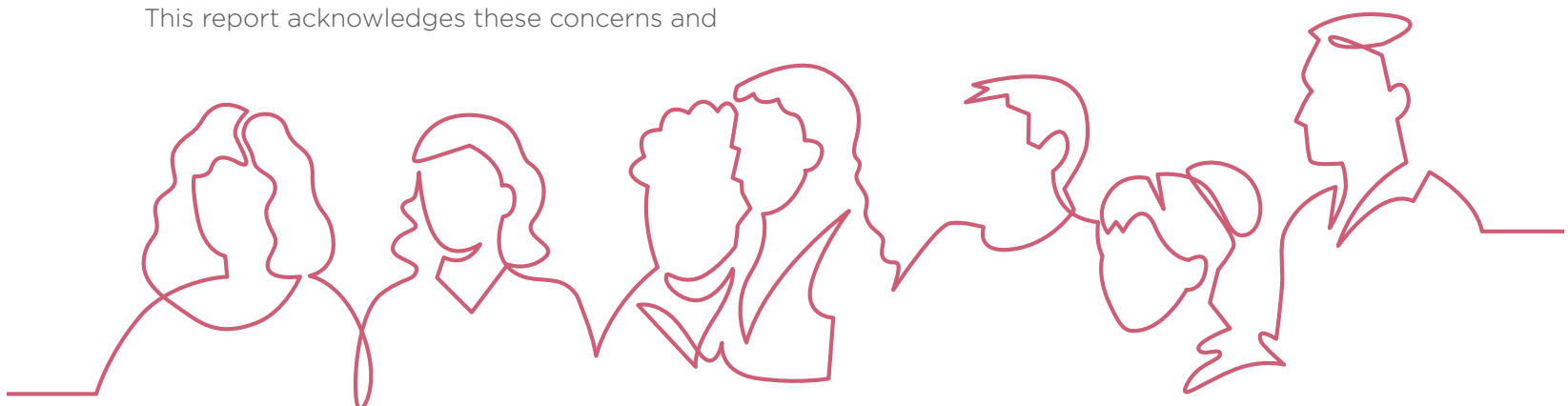
On the back of an unrelenting drought, NSW paid a heavy toll in the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfire emergency. 25 people lost their lives, 2,448 properties were razed and 11,400 fires destroyed 5.5 million hectares – 6% of the State. The wildlife toll has been estimated at nearly 500 million.

In a strong show of multicultural, multifaith solidarity with fire-affected communities, grassroots community organisations stepped up to support fundraising, volunteering and relief efforts.

Religious communities raised funds through their charities, churches, temples, mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras and other places of worship.

More established communities including the Greek, Chinese, Filipino, Italian, Lebanese and Vietnamese communities dug deep to support statewide humanitarian appeals. New and emerging communities including Kurdish, Hazara, Assyrian and Nepalese communities also rallied to donate food, clothes, goods and a helping hand.

These efforts speak volumes about the care, volunteering ethos and generosity of spirit that embodies our shared commitment to each other as Australians. They should be recognised and celebrated as testimony to our social cohesion and community resilience.



To harness fully the power of this community goodwill and to ensure that good intentions are not lost or under-used, it is important to guide spontaneous volunteer responses towards more coordinated volunteering and state recovery efforts.<sup>3</sup> Multicultural NSW will continue to work with Resilience NSW, established in response to the bushfire crisis, to help connect volunteers from the multicultural community sector with formal recovery mechanisms and emergency services agencies.

## COVID-19 closes borders, communities stay connected

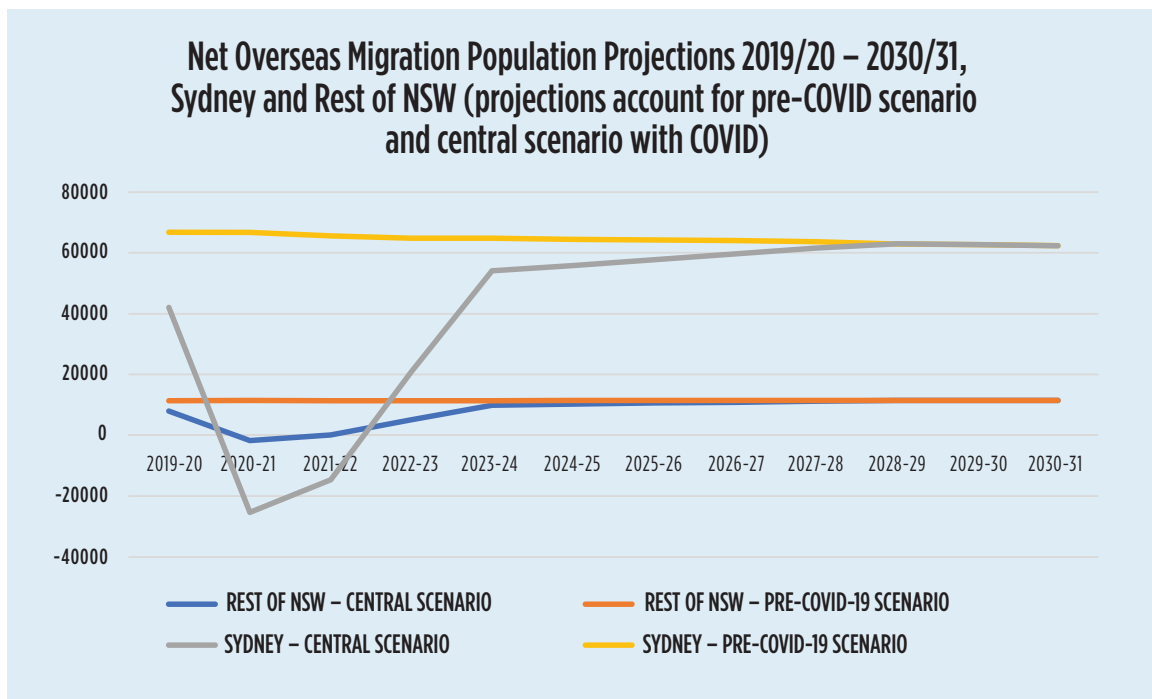
Declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 has had deep and far-reaching effects on almost every facet of our lives.

Migration is consistently a key driver of population and economic growth in NSW and the key force shaping our cultural diversity. The unprecedented closure of Australia’s international borders to non-citizens and non-residents from 20 March 2020 was essential to mitigate the spread of the virus. It also presented, and will continue to present, enormous challenges.

None of the migration targets for 2019-20 could be reached. Almost two-thirds (64.5 per cent) of new permanent migrants in 2019-20 were already in Australia on temporary visas, with the remaining 35.5 per cent of places going to new arrivals before the borders closed.<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth Budget projections indicate almost no population growth in the next two years due to weak net overseas migration (NOM).

NSW population projections for 2023-24, based on current Commonwealth policy settings and assumptions, are likely to be around 376,000 fewer compared to projections at the 2019-20 Commonwealth Half Yearly Review. The decline in population growth is expected to reduce the level of Gross State Product (GSP) in NSW by around 5 per cent by 2023-24 (or almost \$34 billion).<sup>5</sup>

While temporarily halting the intake of new migrants and refugees, with social and economic implications for everyone, the pandemic also had particular economic, social and emotional impacts for migrant cohorts already living, working and studying here.



Source: <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography/Population-projections/Insights>



## Supporting international students in our community

International students were among the first to be impacted by border closures. Many who had supported themselves through casual employment lost their jobs. International students are ineligible for Australian Government support measures such as Job Seeker and Medicare. Many were unable to return home and lost access to overseas financial support due to the economic impact of COVID-19 in their home countries.

A national survey of onshore student sentiment, released in July 2020, found that seven out of 10 onshore international students reported not feeling safe or welcome in Australia during the pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

Ordinarily, international education is the largest services export in NSW and our second largest export overall. The industry was worth \$14 billion in 2018-19 and supported more than 95,000 jobs in NSW through direct employment, homestays, or other services. International students not only make a vital contribution to the State's economy, they also live as part of our community and their experiences while living here contribute to our global reputation as a top destination for higher education.

For all these reasons, it was critical to support international students living in our community during the pandemic. In March 2020, Study NSW responded swiftly to raise international student awareness of available support services by delivering the #InThisTogether campaign alongside other Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies. The campaign also provided a powerful platform for communities to counter negative sentiment by sharing messages of solidarity with international students.

In May 2020, the NSW Government announced a \$20 million support package for international students, including temporary crisis accommodation, a dedicated 24/7 support line and increased legal support through the International Student Legal Service NSW. By October 2020, 4,850 applications for temporary crisis accommodation for international students had been approved.

## Temporary visa holders in a precarious position

Other temporary visa holders living in our community also became especially vulnerable. People on temporary visas also include people on working holiday visas (such as backpackers), temporary skilled workers, partner and spousal visa holders, temporary humanitarian visa holders and asylum seekers on bridging visas. Job losses compounded the vulnerability of many temporary visa holders who are ineligible for Australian Government support measures.

In June 2020, the NSW Government established a one-off \$4 million grants program to support vulnerable temporary visa holders and specialist migrant and settlement non-government organisations working with temporary visa holders during COVID-19. Funding assisted temporary visa holders to meet their basic needs through food, medicine, telecommunications and transport.



▲ Volunteers ready to distribute food to those in need.

**The Redfern Islamic Society supported vulnerable international students struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of whom faced unemployment, severe financial hardship and housing insecurity. The mosque started providing free meals to vulnerable students during the 30 days of Ramadan to ensure they had a meal to break their fast. At one stage the mosque was feeding up to 70 students a day. The food is entirely cooked and donated by the local Islamic community. The mosque's volunteer chef Elif promotes her charitable cooking on her Instagram page: [https://www.instagram.com/elifs\\_kitchen01/](https://www.instagram.com/elifs_kitchen01/)**



▲ Father Atanasio Gonelli Charitable Fund board members with some young volunteers.

Since launching the Supporting Italian Youth on Temporary Visas Program, the Father Atanasio Gonelli Charitable Fund received more than 200 requests for financial assistance. Needs ranged from covering the cost of Opal Cards and phone cards so people can search for work, emergency funds for rental arrears, funds to cover medical expenses and other emergency needs.

The Father Atanasio Gonelli Charitable Fund received a \$5,000 Emergency COVID-19 Grant from Multicultural NSW. Together with its own \$2,100 contribution, the charity assisted 71 unemployed young Italian men and women residing in NSW on temporary visas by providing each individual with a \$100 emergency grocery voucher.

It was also recognised that asylum seekers were among the most vulnerable people living in our community. Unofficial estimates by the community sector suggest there are about 12,000-15,000 asylum seekers now living in NSW. Charities that support asylum seekers reported an escalation of medical emergencies, homelessness, food insecurity and self-harm in this cohort. Increased demand placed significant extra pressure on the sector to respond.

The NSW Government also stepped up to provide more than \$2 million in one-off to specialist non-government organisations to support asylum seekers in crisis.

## Grassroots crisis response

Grassroots multicultural community organisations have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to deliver food packages and provide support services to international students, temporary visa holders, isolated seniors and other vulnerable cohorts.

Multicultural NSW boosted these grassroots efforts by awarding \$600,000 in small grants to 120 multicultural groups to supply food,

groceries, rent assistance, help with utility bills and transport costs for temporary visa holders and other vulnerable people in our community.

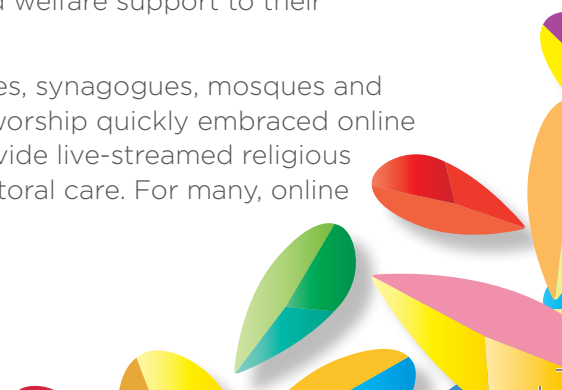
Once again, the volunteering ethos and community spirit of our multicultural sector shone through to bring a sense of hope in a time of need.


## Keeping the faith and staying safe

Religious fellowship has played a vital role in supporting people spiritually, socially and emotionally during these challenging times.

Places of worship are also places of community, culture, family, friends, celebration, charity and mourning. When public health priorities meant places of worship had to be closed to the public, faith leaders and religious charities found innovative ways to provide spiritual, psychosocial and welfare support to their communities.

Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship quickly embraced online platforms to provide live-streamed religious services and pastoral care. For many, online





▲ Churches, temples, synagogues and mosques quickly embraced online platforms to provide live-streamed religious services and pastoral care

streaming of religious services attracted larger congregations than ever before.

In April 2020, with celebrations for Passover, Easter, Orthodox Easter and Ramadan all starting in the same month, faith leaders showed great strength and ingenuity in finding new ways to observe days of religious significance, keeping everybody connected with their faith while keeping them safe.

Religious leaders also played a vital role in flattening the curve during the pandemic.

From March 2020, Multicultural NSW activated its interfaith Religious Communities Forum in weekly online engagement forums to empower senior faith leaders across the State with the latest public health information to help get the message out about COVID-19 and share ideas on how to stop the spread.

Forty online engagement forums were convened from March to December 2020 involving more than 150 religious leaders from more than 100 faith groups.

## Regional insights

In March 2020, Multicultural NSW activated its Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) network online to better understand the impact of the pandemic on communities across the State. More than 50 online RAC forums were held from March to December 2020 involving more than 250 regional stakeholders.

Many of the concerns raised by the multicultural sector were also common concerns for the general population across regional and metropolitan areas, and exacerbated for already vulnerable cohorts of migrants and refugees.

Concerns included the mental health impacts of social isolation and increased unemployment or underemployment, the isolation of seniors and increased health fears among the elderly, domestic family pressures while staying at home, and low levels of digital literacy limiting access to public health information, welfare support services and children's education while remote schooling. All these issues can be exacerbated for people with language barriers or a lack of social connection, often experienced by newly arrived migrants and refugees.

For many migrants, a sense of social isolation was compounded by international border closures. These made it very difficult for people to return to their countries of birth to unite with friends and family and effectively stopped families visiting here. For those who lost loved ones in countries that have not fared as well as Australia, this was also a time of distress, grief and mourning.

RAC members raised concerns that some migrants who are looking for information in their own language may be relying on inaccurate health information from overseas news and information sources. This reinforced the importance of communicating NSW public

health information in community languages and through appropriate channels that communities will listen to. The RAC networks were an important channel to share translated public health information with communities.

RAC members also shared advice about ways to empower local leaders with public health information to communicate to their own communities, especially where low levels of digital literacy may prevent community members from accessing online government information.

For refugees who have past experiences of pandemics such as Ebola and HIV in their countries of origin, there were concerns that the onset of COVID-19 may evoke traumatic memories. Recognising that many refugees have experienced the brunt of war and authoritarian regimes, there were concerns that some may fear the heightened presence of police and army personnel when state borders closed. Conversely, RAC members acknowledged that refugees are often remarkably resilient people who have survived far worse situations in life than the relatively undemanding restrictions imposed in Australia.

Refugee housing was a recurring theme in the RAC consultations. With many Sydneysiders seeking out “tree-change” opportunities while working from home during the pandemic, many regional stakeholders were acutely aware of the impact of rising house prices on refugee families who have settled or are hoping to settle. Multicultural NSW will closely monitor the impact of this trend on regional resettlement.

Regional stakeholders raised concerns that some temporary visa holders, including seasonal agricultural workers, may have avoided contact with important services for fear of being told to return to their home countries.

RAC members were concerned about racism during the pandemic. This was especially the case early on, with concerns linked to media reporting on the origins of the virus and exacerbated by heightened diplomatic tensions between Australia and China.

These concerns are addressed in more detail later in this report when we discuss the latest findings of the Scanlon Foundation survey and the work of the NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) Committee.

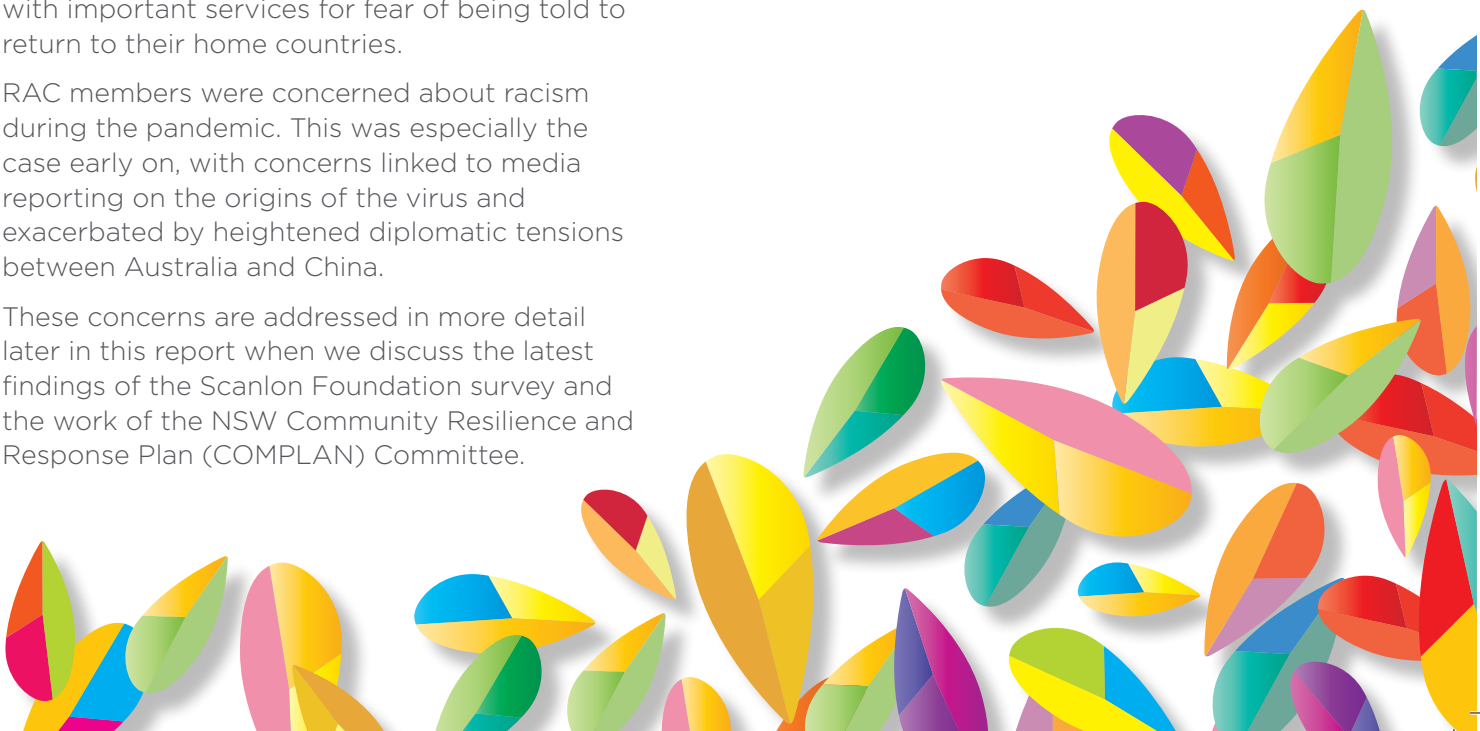
## Learning from COVID

The insights and contributions of regional stakeholders through our online RAC consultations helped to build an evidence base to inform the allocation of emergency relief funding for temporary visa holders, food support, interpreting and translating and other community needs.

RAC members also provided insights into some of the unexpected benefits of COVID-19 for the multicultural sector. For example, we have all learned to use technology better to connect with clients and communities. We have learned to be more flexible, innovative and collaborative in our work for the community. The pandemic has highlighted the value of volunteers and the need to support and retain them. Community organisations have also learned a lot about planning, preparedness, risk management and resilience.

The RAC network itself expanded significantly and became highly active as we moved our engagements online. For the first time, online forums allowed us to bring RAC members and observers together in one virtual place to share insights and experiences with each other from across regions.

The experience has taught us new ways of working, new ways of collaborating, and new ways of connecting with communities that will inform future regional engagement strategies.



## Impacts of COVID-19 on migrant and refugee women

A roundtable hosted by Multicultural NSW and Women NSW in November 2020 brought RAC members and specialist services together from across NSW regions to explore the impacts of the pandemic on migrant and refugee women.

For expecting and new mothers from migrant communities, international border closures meant missing out on visits from family members who often provide an informal support network during this important time of life.

Migrant and refugee women often experienced additional care responsibilities with children and families spending more time at home. This put extra pressure on refugee women in large households.

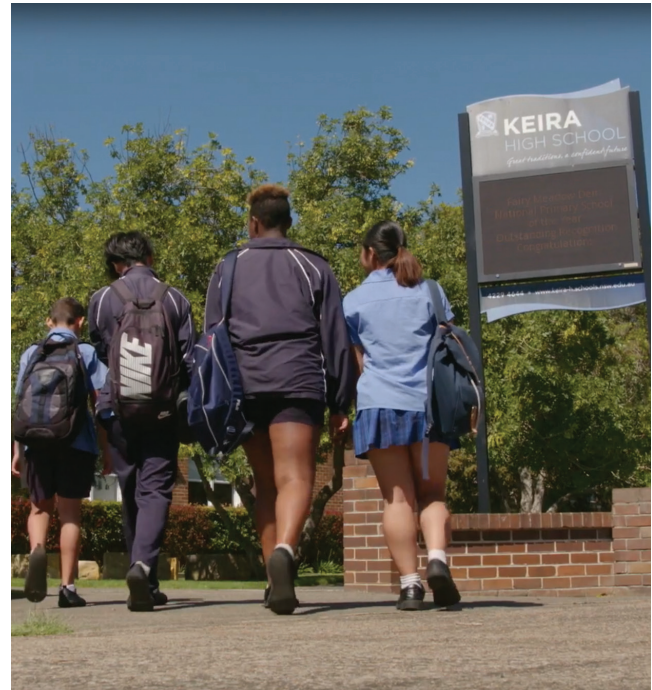
With school closures, some migrant and refugee mothers experienced challenges in supporting school-aged children in remote learning. Challenges related to language barriers, limited knowledge of the schooling system, digital literacy issues and limited access to devices to access online learning.

While formal reports of domestic and family violence did not appear to rise during the pandemic, concerns remained in the sector that social isolation may prevent migrant and refugee women already exposed to family violence from accessing support services.

The roundtable acknowledged the innovative and collaborative work being done to address these issues across the State. It also identified a range of opportunities to foster cross-sector collaboration and enhance cultural diversity awareness among services to support migrant and refugee women.



## COVID Warriors in the Illawarra



▲ Students from Kierra High School trained to become COVID Warriors

The COVID Warriors program is a partnership between the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Multicultural Health Service, the Multicultural Communities Council of the Illawarra (MCCI), and local high schools. The program looked to young people as part of the solution in delivering public health information and practical advice to newly settled migrants and their families.

The program empowers high school students with information and hands-on experience on public health protocols that they then take home to share with their families and communities.

Noella Jacques, a 14-year-old student from Kierra High School involved in the COVID Warriors program, said:

*"Not everyone speaks English, there are many people who don't watch the news, they don't know what to do with COVID, so they have told us to tell our parents about what we do in class."*

Leissa Pitts, Service Manager for the Multicultural Health Service, confirmed the success of the program.

*"The health information that we have been able to provide in partnership with MCCI in terms of prevention of infection of the coronavirus, testing, self-isolation, other important key messages can and has been communicated through our young people."*

Hear more about COVID Warriors here: [youtube.com/watch?v=2PtXk5XrrVY&t=160s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=2PtXk5XrrVY&t=160s)



## 2020 Metro-Regional Inclusive Communities Youth Summit



▲ Students from Glenroi Heights Public School teaching the principle of Yindyamarra

In November 2020, seven schools from around NSW presented their ideas about diversity and inclusion to politicians and community leaders at the Metro-Regional Inclusive Communities Youth Summit hosted by Together for Humanity at NSW Parliament House.

This year's theme focused on community resilience and maintaining community harmony in the current COVID-19 climate. Students could use any format to present their ideas.

Students from regional school Glenroi Heights Public School created a video teaching the principle of Yindyamarra, a word derived from the Wiradjuri language meaning 'respect, be gentle, be polite and do slowly'. The students related this concept to the importance of community harmony to champion how everyone should feel safe and welcome in their communities.

Calisha Bennett, Education Officer at Together for Humanity, believes our community has shown resilience in the face of challenges in 2020.

*"Coming out of 2020, I think that everyone maybe been shaken, a little overwhelmed, a little bit unsure about the future and about our role and our place in the communities and in the world at large. But I think we have really been able to learn the potential resilience we all carry within us. I think that while in reality we have been separated and restricted, in ways we are more connected than ever before."*

The Metro-Regional Inclusive Communities Youth Summit was supported by Multicultural NSW under the COMPACT Program.



# Assessing the health of social cohesion in a pandemic

## Reflections on the findings of the 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion survey

### Evidence of resilience: 2020 Mapping Social Cohesion survey

Mapping Social Cohesion is a major national survey of public opinion on social cohesion, immigration and population issues conducted each year by Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University for the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute in partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation.

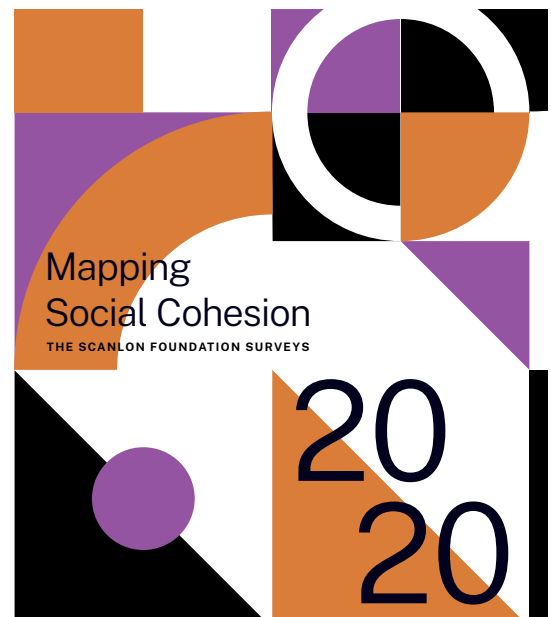
In 2020, the Scanlon Foundation conducted its 13th national survey. In the context of the pandemic, the 2020 survey provides a robust, evidence-based response to some of the pressing questions and concerns that have been raised about the health of our social cohesion nationally.

15



Professor Markus frames the problem as follows:

*Societies faced with crisis may for a time experience increased cohesion, as people respond to a common threat through mutual support... On the other hand, societies under pressure may fracture, as its members turn inward, focusing on people to blame, searching for scapegoats. Such societies may experience heightened pessimism, lower sense of wellbeing and life satisfaction, fostering of anti-immigrant sentiment, and opposition to cultural diversity and multiculturalism.<sup>7</sup>*



To answer the question as to whether Australian society had experienced cohesion or fracture in 2020, for the first time ever the Scanlon survey was conducted twice (first in July and then in November 2020) to track opinion at different stages of the pandemic and gather insights into the resilience of Australian society when faced with a major crisis.<sup>8</sup>

As may be expected, the Scanlon surveys found that the COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest concern in the community in 2020, dominating usual concerns about the economy, unemployment and poverty.

Perhaps unexpectedly, given the concerns aired by many commentators during the pandemic, the Scanlon Monash Index (SMI) showed social cohesion moved in a positive direction in 2020.

The SMI measures attitudes within the five domains of belonging, worth, social justice, political participation, and acceptance/rejection. The benchmark 2007 survey set the overall Index at 100.0 points. In 2020 it sat at 89.4 in July and 92.3 in November, an increase from 83.7 in 2019.

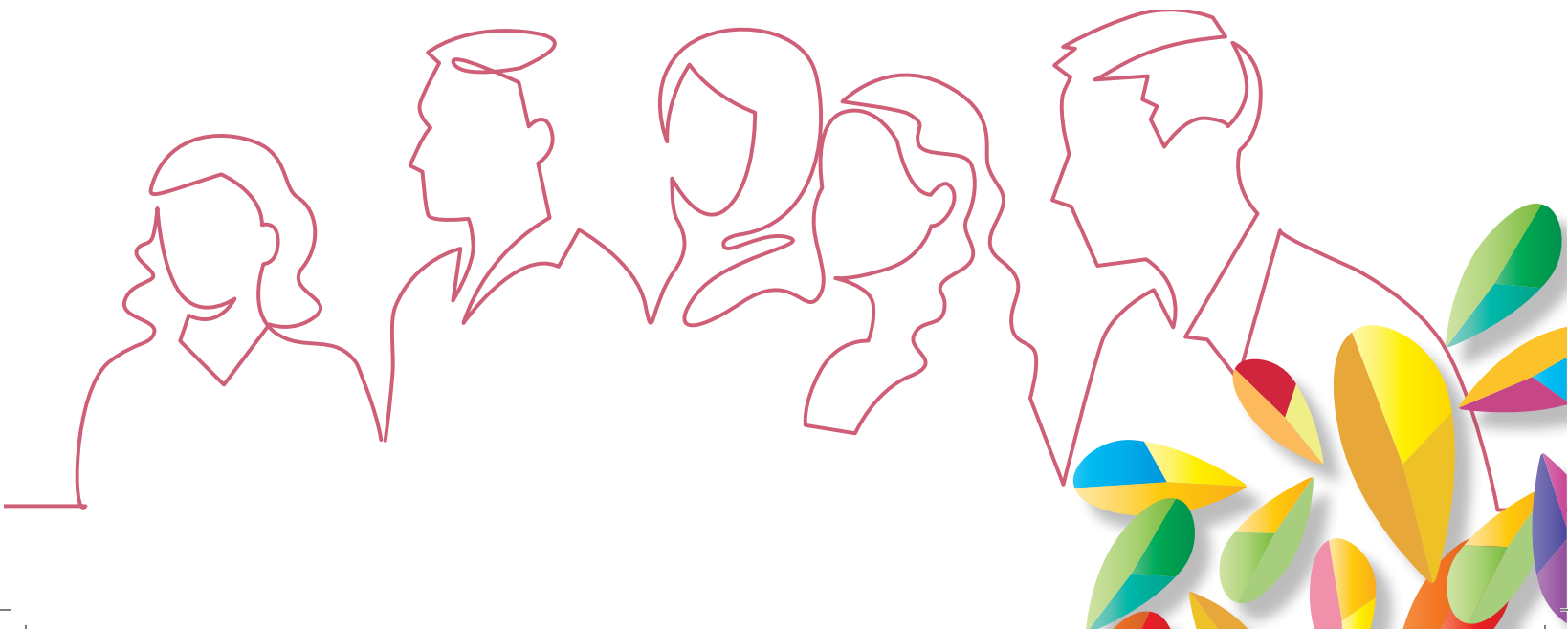
**The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, 2018-20 (LinA) ▼**

DOMAIN	2018	2019	July 2020	Change 2019-20 July	Nov 2020	Change 2020 July-Nov
1. Sense of belonging	85.0	86.0	88.3	+2.3	87.5	-0.8
2. Sense of worth	77.4	80.0	84.0	+4.0	83.0	-1.0
3. Social justice and equity	87.8	92.6	112.0	+19.4	110.5	-1.5
4. Political participation	94.6	93.0	95.4	+2.4	93.8	-1.6
5. Acceptance (rejection)	62.9	66.7	67.4	+0.7	86.6	+19.2
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>81.5</b>	<b>83.7</b>	<b>89.4</b>	<b>+5.8</b>	<b>92.3</b>	<b>+2.9</b>

Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Table 12

The 2020 Scanlon surveys provide clear evidence that Australia has proven to be a strong, cohesive and resilient society throughout the pandemic.

One of the key positive findings relates to the high level of trust in government in its response to the pandemic. This includes the widely held view that effective leadership is being provided in the time of crisis, including financial support to those who have lost their jobs and those whose businesses have been impacted.



## Support for multiculturalism remains strong

Also clear from the findings is that support for multiculturalism in Australia remains in very good health and is certainly strong enough to withstand the pressures and uncertainties of a global crisis.

For many years, the Scanlon surveys have consistently found a strong level of support for multiculturalism, an understanding of the social and economic benefits of immigration, and a rejection of discrimination based on race or religion in immigrant selection.

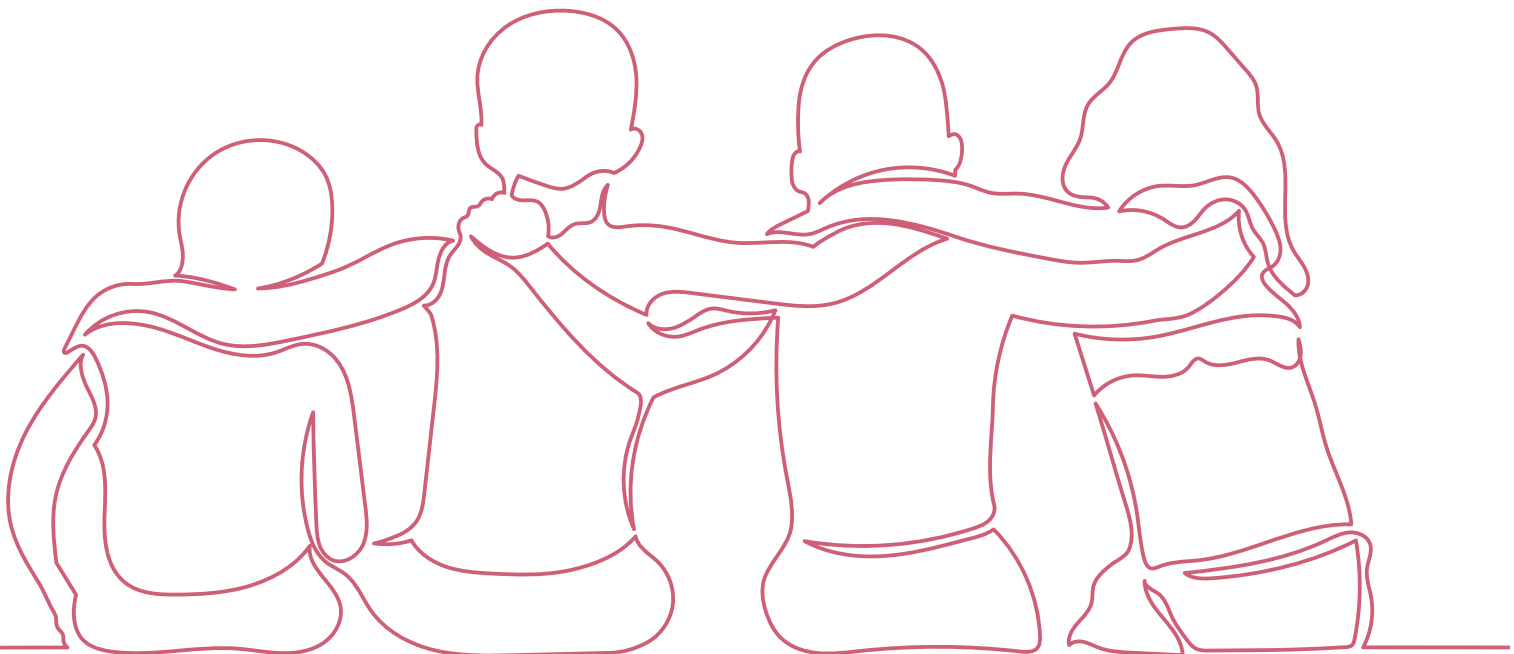
This support remained high in 2020, with 84% of Australians agreeing or strongly agreeing that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, a statistically significant increase from 80% in 2019.

**'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia' 2018-20 (percentage, LiNA) ▼**

RESPONSE	2018	2019	2020 July	2020 Nov
Strongly agree	26	25	26	27
Agree	52	55	58	57
<b>Sub-total agree</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>84*</b>	<b>84</b>
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1	0	0
Disagree	14	12	11	11
Strongly disagree	8	7	5	4
<b>Sub-total disagree</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>
N (unweighted)	2,260	2,033	3,090	2,793

\* Change between 2019 and July 2020 statistically significant at p<.05

Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Table 40



## Attitudes towards minorities and experiences of anti-Asian sentiment

While support for multiculturalism remained positive in 2020, this positive attitude exists alongside a level of negative sentiment towards some minorities, including people born in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

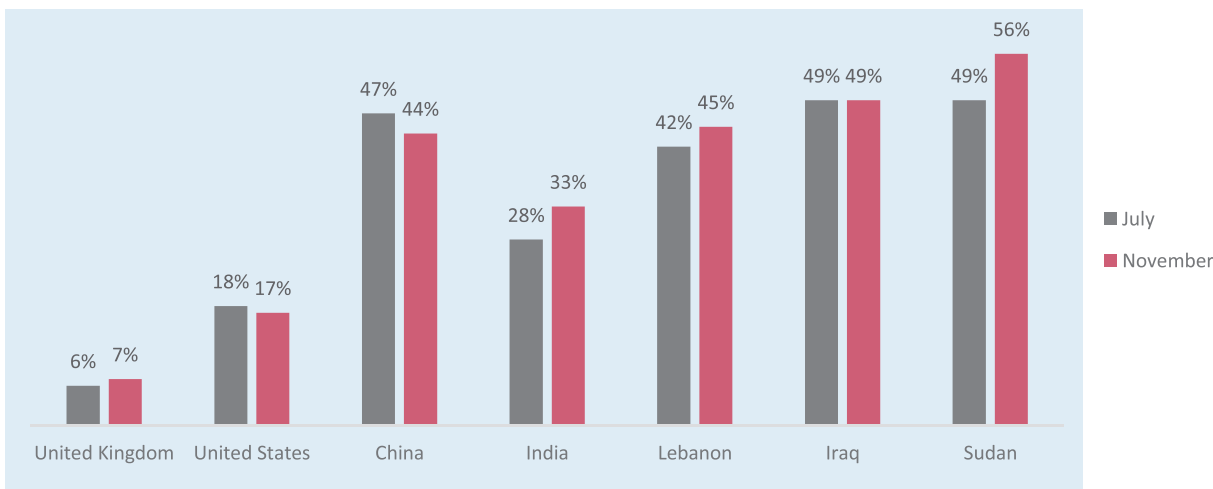
The 2020 Scanlon survey also confirms some of the concerns raised by community groups about the potential for heightened anti-Asian and anti-Chinese sentiment.

59% of Australians born in Asian countries reported holding the view that racism is ‘a very big problem’ or ‘a fairly big problem’ in Australia, compared with 36% born in Australia.

In 2020, the Scanlon Foundation commissioned Bastion Insights to conduct a special survey in Simplified Chinese language that asked a specific question of Australians of Chinese ancestry about their experiences of discrimination during the crisis.

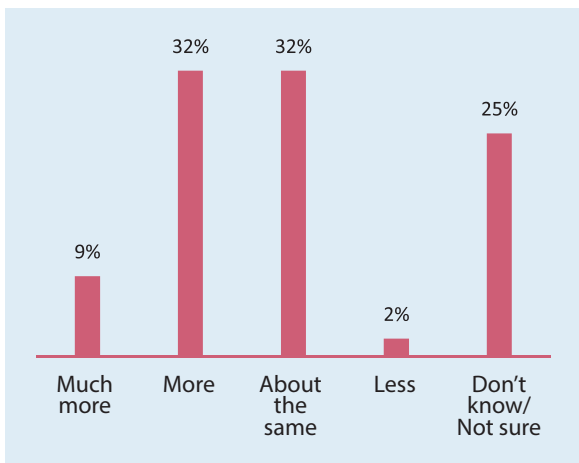
41% of Chinese-background respondents indicated that had experienced ‘more’ (32%) or ‘much more’ (9%) discrimination, while 32% reported ‘about the same’ levels.

**‘Would you say your feelings are positive, negative, or neutral towards [national group]?’  
Response: ‘very negative’ and ‘somewhat negative’, July and November 2020 (LinA) ▼**



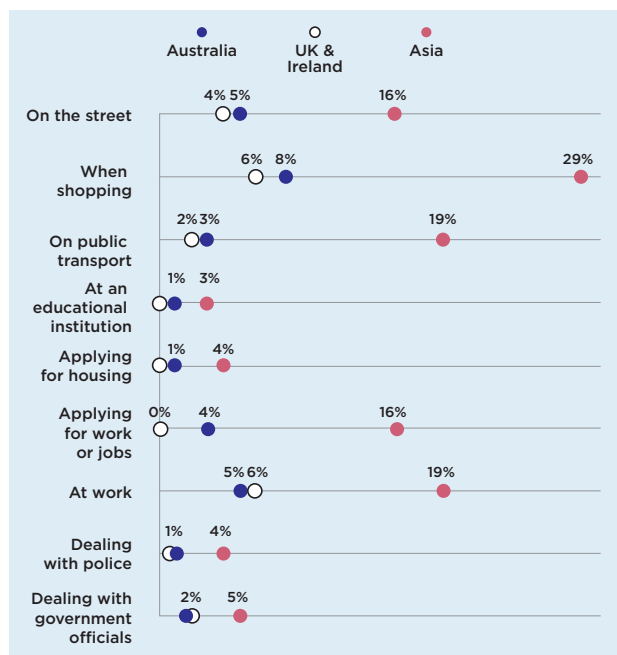
Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Figure 39

**‘During the COVID-19 crisis, have you experienced more, less or about the same extent of discrimination as before the crisis in Australia? Respondent born in China, May-June 2020 ▼**



Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Figure 45

**Places where discrimination was experienced during COVID-19 by country of birth and region, July 2020 (percentage, LinA) ▼**



Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Figure 44

## Experiences of racism online

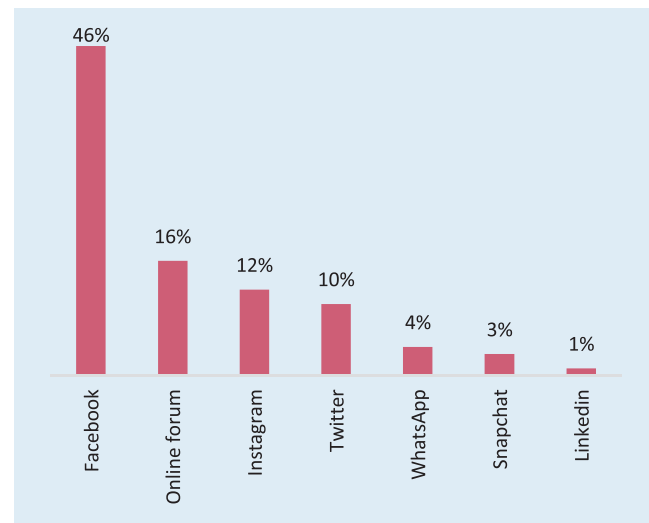
The July 2020 Scanlon survey tested community concerns about the spread of racist content online during COVID-19.

Most respondents, 55%, indicated that they had seen racist content in the past three months. Of those aged 18-24, 73% had seen racist content online.

Most of those who has seen racism online, 54%, indicated that they took no action. Only respondents born in Asia indicated that they reported racist comment to police or government, and then only a very small minority (3%) did so.

Of the platforms specified, by far the largest proportion, 46%, had seen racist content on Facebook, 16% on an online forum, 12% on Instagram, and 10% on Twitter.

**In the last three months, have you personally seen racist content on any of the following?  
Response: Yes, July 2020 (LinA) ▼**



Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Figure 46

## Attitudes towards Muslims

One of the consistently concerning findings of the Scanlon surveys for several years now has been high levels of negative sentiment directed towards Australian Muslims.

This finding has led the Scanlon Foundation to state that: *“The level of negative sentiment towards those of the Muslim faith is a factor of significance in contemporary Australian society.”*

In measuring attitudes towards different faith groups in 2020, Scanlon reports the highest negative response was towards Muslims, at 35-37%.

This compares with negative attitudes at 4%-5% towards Buddhist, 9% Jewish, 11%-12% Christian, 12% Hindu, and 13%-14% Sikh.

While negative sentiment towards Australian Muslims remains at a high level, there is indication of a slight lessening of negative sentiment compared to previous years. The findings nevertheless confirm what many community members and leaders have reported in relation to anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia. There is more work to do to reduce misunderstanding and foster positive engagement between Muslims and other Australians.

**‘Is your personal attitude positive, negative or neutral towards ... [faith group]?’,  
Response: ‘very negative’ and ‘somewhat negative’, 2017-20 LinA (percentage) ▼**

FAITH GROUP	2017	2018	2019	2020 July	2020 Nov
Buddhist	6	7	6	5	4
Jewish	--	--	--	9	9
Christian	12	12	14	11*	12
Hindu	--	--	10	12	12
Sikh	--	--	--	13	14
Muslim	41	39	40	37	35

\*Change between 2019 and July 2020 statistically significant at p<.05

Source: 2020 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Table 54

The upcoming sections of this report highlight some of the NSW Government efforts to monitor and address threats to social cohesion during COVID-19 through the NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN), Stop Public Threats campaign, and the Remove Hate From The Debate initiative.

# Monitoring and addressing issues impacting on community harmony

## 2020 Report from the NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) Committee

The NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) aims to maintain and promote community harmony, build community resilience, and better equip the State to prevent, limit, withstand, respond to, and recover from situations that threaten community harmony.

COMPLAN is established pursuant to Section 13f of the Multicultural NSW Act 2000, which authorises Multicultural NSW to provide a single coordination point for integrated responses to issues associated with cultural diversity. COMPLAN draws together NSW agencies capabilities and details a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to preventing and managing risks to community harmony. COMPLAN facilitates coordination of information and insights identified by agencies through any of their community engagement activities, social cohesion programs or complaints processes.

The COMPLAN Committee, chaired by Multicultural NSW, is a senior officers group comprised of representatives from the NSW Police Force, Anti-Discrimination NSW, Department of Education, Department of Communities and Justice (Office of Community Safety and Cohesion), NSW Health, Resilience NSW, Local Government NSW and Multicultural NSW. Other agencies are invited to join COMPLAN Committee meetings as required to advise on matters relevant to their portfolios.

The COMPLAN Committee is responsible for the oversight and implementation of COMPLAN across the four plan phases of Preparedness, Prevention, Response and Recovery.

The Committee's activities for 2020 are summarised below.<sup>9</sup>

## Monitoring the community harmony impacts of COVID-19

The COMPLAN Committee convened seven times between February and November 2020 to identify, assess, monitor, and share information and resources about the community harmony impacts of COVID-19.

The Committee examined a range of community concerns in this context, including:

- experiences and perceptions of racism and racist scapegoating surrounding the pandemic, including anti-Asian and anti-Chinese sentiment;
- experiences of international students (Study NSW was invited to join Committee meetings to advise on these matters);
- communities exposed to health misinformation or disinformation from overseas sources;
- extremists and racist conspiracy theorists exploiting the pandemic for ideological ends, especially in the online environment, including the promotion of anti-Semitic and anti-government conspiracies;
- the global and local Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement heightening community awareness and sentiment around racial issues, and potential tensions between BLM protests and public gatherings restrictions.

## Reporting racism

NSW Police Force reported that overall hate crime reporting in 2020 remained comparable with 2019 levels. However, of the incidents reported during COVID-19, the key victim categories were identified as members of the Asian community, particularly persons of Chinese descent. This was attributed to media reporting on the pandemic's spread, racial scapegoating on social media, and current political tensions between the Australian and Chinese governments. NSW Police Force reported an increase in victims of South Asian appearance, which was likely linked to the victims' employment as security guards enforcing social distancing rules at retail stores, supermarkets and public transport hubs.

Anti-Discrimination NSW reported no marked increase in formal racial discrimination complaints compared to previous years. However, it received a number of enquiries relating to perceived racial discrimination in employment as businesses became increasingly impacted. Enquiries also related to perceived experiences of discrimination in relation to denial of service in retail and other service sector settings. Anti-Discrimination NSW advised that many enquiries related to intersecting grounds of complaint (such as race and disability).

The Department of Education advised there was no marked increase in incident reporting, but noted an increased demand for anti-racism support in schools in the context of COVID-19 and BLM protests.

Study NSW conveyed the findings of a national survey, released in July 2020, that found that seven out of 10 onshore international students reported not feeling safe or welcome in Australia during the pandemic.

In addition to formal agency reporting processes, the COMPLAN Committee acknowledged community-led efforts to document and respond to experiences of racism. Committee members also participated in a number of engagement forums to raise community awareness of reporting and redress mechanisms and support services. For example:

- in March 2020, Study NSW responded swiftly to raise of available support services for international student awareness by delivering the #InThisTogether campaign with Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies.

The campaign also provided a powerful platform for communities to counter negative sentiment by sharing messages of solidarity with international students;

- in May 2020, the NSW Government launched the Stop Public Threats campaign to raise community awareness of the Crimes Amendment (Publicly Threatening and Inciting Violence) Act 2018. The law creates a criminal offence of threatening or inciting violence on the ground of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex or HIV/AIDS status. The Department of Communities and Justice worked in partnership with Legal Aid NSW, Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, NSW Police Force, Multicultural NSW and community stakeholders in developing the campaign;
- in July 2020, Multicultural NSW, Anti-Discrimination NSW, NSW Police Force, Office of Community Safety and Cohesion, Legal Aid NSW and the Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner participated in the Reporting Racism: Know Your Rights online forum organised by the Chinese Australian Forum;
- in July 2020, the Office of Community Safety and Cohesion in collaboration with Multicultural NSW hosted a community webinar on Building Community Resilience in an Uncertain World that addressed current threats to cohesion posed by extremists and racist conspiracy theorists exploiting the pandemic. The webinar also promoted grant funding opportunities to address these problems through the Multicultural NSW COMPACT Program;
- in October 2020, NSW Police Force and Multicultural NSW co-hosted a workshop with the Police Commissioner's Multicultural Advisory Council (PMAC) on current threats to social cohesion and strategies for enhancing social cohesion during and after the pandemic;
- The Department of Education updated and strengthened its anti-racism policy to provide more clarity on the reporting responsibilities and training needs of school staff;
- Local Government NSW advised that the Local Government Multicultural Network formed an anti-racism working group to identify emerging racism concerns and develop local actions to combat racism. Member actions included delivering a series of anti-racism bystander training workshops and developing local anti-racism campaigns and targeted communications to community groups;



- Multicultural NSW increased the promotion of the Remove Hate From The Debate online campaign to empower young people with the tools and resources to speak out against online hate and promote community harmony.

## Supporting communities impacted by overseas events and issues

COMPLAN recognises that community harmony may be affected by local, state, national or international incidents, situations, or events.

The global pandemic has been particularly distressing for residents who have lost loved ones in countries that have not fared as well as Australia through the pandemic. International border closures further impacted people unable to reunite with friends and family in their countries of origin. Concerns that communities may be relying on health information from overseas sources, which may be inaccurate or inappropriate to the Australian context, reinforced the importance of communicating NSW public health information in community languages and through community channels. In its public reporting, NSW Health has been sure to separate the number of overseas-acquired cases from community-based transmission to better understand its spread and manage community concerns.



The global Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement resonated among many people here. Community-led protests revealed the depth of sentiment and served to heighten awareness around racial issues. Despite concerns about potential tensions between BLM protests and public gathering restrictions, the peaceful protests did not present a threat to community harmony.

The outbreak of armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region stirred deep emotions in local communities connected to that part of the world. Protests in Sydney were passionate but peaceful and adhered to public gathering restrictions. Concerns that a vandalism attack on the Gallipoli Mosque in Auburn may have been related to the conflict were dispelled by NSW Police Force, which advised the incident was related to mental health.

A public order incident in Harris Park in August 2020, followed by a series of other incidents, raised concerns about the impact of tensions between Hindu and Sikh movements in India on local community relations. While isolated to a small number of individual perpetrators, the incidents attracted significant attention on social media and in the Indian media. Multicultural NSW and NSW Police Force brought Hindu and Sikh community leaders together to promote community harmony in response to the incidents. NSW Police Force actively engaged the local community, investigated and laid charges against individuals involved. NSW Police Force does not regard the issue as reflective of broader community tensions. Hindu and Sikh community leaders committed to continue working together to promote harmony and mutual trust.

## Reviewing COMPLAN

Multicultural NSW plans to review arrangements under COMPLAN based on the experience of 2020 and to reflect the current roles and responsibilities of agencies in relation to community harmony issues.



# STOP PUBLIC THREATS CAMPAIGN

**PUBLIC THREATS  
AGAINST SOME OF US**  
A PROBLEM FOR ALL OF US



In May 2020, the NSW Government launched a multimedia campaign targeting hate and xenophobia, including abuse occurring online and in the community during the pandemic.

The Stop Public Threats campaign is designed to help victim-survivors and the community understand their legal rights and ensure that threats of violence are reported to police for investigation.

The campaign builds on the NSW Government's introduction of tough penalties of up to three years' imprisonment for anyone that publicly incites violence against someone on

the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, intersex or HIV/AIDS status.

The new law was introduced after a concerted campaign by a coalition of 31 community groups and leaders to strengthen laws tackling racially or religiously motivated incitement to violence.

The Stop Public Threats website provides information on what we can all do to stop public threats, including threats on social media. The website includes a range of translated resources on discrimination, legal rights, and points of contact.

[stoppublicthreats.legalaid.nsw.gov.au](https://stoppublicthreats.legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

# REMOVE HATE FROM THE DEBATE

A lot of people were spending more time online to work, study and find a sense of community and social connection during the pandemic. However, there is a risk that young people will encounter racist, hateful and other harmful content online and not know what to do.

Responding to concerns about increasing experiences of online racism and hate, Multicultural NSW boosted promotion of the Remove Hate From The Debate campaign.

Remove Hate From the Debate is an online initiative that aims to amplify and empower positive voices for change. The project gives young people the resources and advice to

stay safe online and to ‘flip the script’ on online hate. Young people are encouraged to go the project website and take the pledge to Remove Hate From the Debate.

Remove Hate From the Debate is a unique partnership between Multicultural NSW, digital industry partners and the campaign’s Fearless Ambassadors.

Officially launched in June 2019, the social media campaign has reached more than 900,000 people.

There was an upsurge of interest during the pandemic, with the campaign reaching 377,000 people and achieving 27,000 engagements on social media from March to July 2020.



[removehatefromthedebate.com](https://removehatefromthedebate.com)

# EMPOWERING YOUTH TO RESPOND TO EXTREMIST CONSPIRACIES

Funded by Multicultural NSW under the COMPACT program since 2016, Community Action for Preventing Extremism (CAPE) NSW: promoting resilience and response to far-right extremism is a project delivered by the national anti-racism charity All Together Now in partnership with Youth Action, Macquarie University and the Challenging Racism Project at Western Sydney University.

CAPE NSW aims to increase community awareness of the dangers of far-right extremism and has responded to the pandemic by addressing the propagation of extremist conspiracy theories online.

Since 2018, the project has focused on providing specialised training to frontline youth workers. The project has created, delivered and updated specialised resources, including training materials, the CAPE website, and the CAPE newsletter. Each of these has been designed to create an informed professional network of youth workers committed to countering far-right extremism.

Since 2018, a total of 18 urban and regional training sessions have been facilitated with more than 200 frontline staff and workers from across a comprehensive range of stakeholder organisations dealing with young people. Resources have been distributed to well over 6,000 people through its website and newsletters.

Measuring the longer term outcomes of the CAPE training program, Macquarie

University's evaluation report highlights the ongoing benefits experienced by training participants, stating that six months after participating in training, "many of the participants still felt they had gained knowledge and skills, and had increased their awareness, understanding, and ability to engage with the problem of far-right extremism."

*"We used the training as professional learning for our teaching staff. We are located in this part of Sydney where there is some advertisement for white supremacy-based groups in the area. We had one student who was expressing some racist views. We now use the training to identify students at risk and to talk about the content delivered from the course".* From school in Sydney metropolitan area.

The evaluation report also found that by "directly addressing the challenge of far-right extremism, a rapidly growing area of risk, CAPE represented a unique and valuable inclusion to a program (COMPACT) that aims to holistically confront racism, hate, extremism, and violence throughout all communities"

In late 2019 and through the first half of 2020, CAPE NSW was able to adapt to the bushfire and COVID-19 pandemic by pivoting to the online delivery of training programs.

From 2021, All Together Now will adapt its experience to deliver a new COMPACT program addressing online extremist conspiracy theories.

# GOOD PRACTICE IN MULTICULTURAL POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

## Putting the Multicultural Principles into Practice

The NSW Government is committed to quality customer service. In a culturally diverse society, that means ensuring that government programs and services are available and appropriate to everyone - irrespective of their cultural, linguistic or religious heritage.

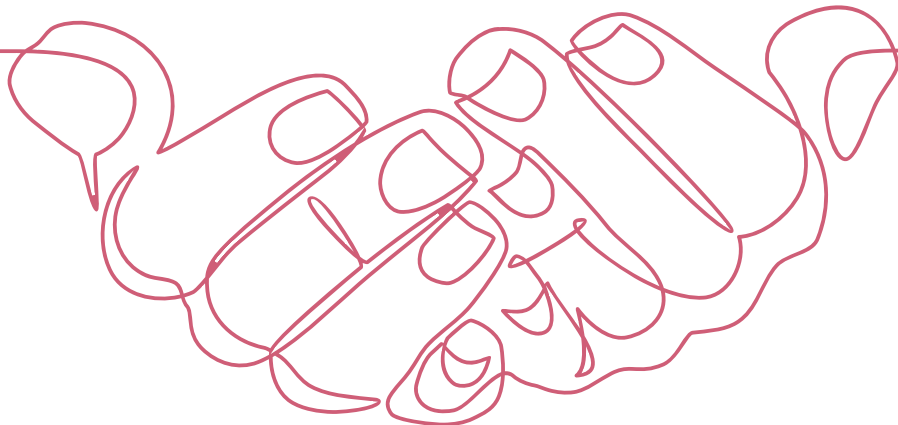
This section of the Community Relations Report provides an insight into how designated agencies are putting the Multicultural Principles into practice with the aim of achieving both equity and efficacy in government service delivery.



### The Multicultural Principles:

- *Share democratic values, governed by the rule of law, and promote a unified commitment to Australia.*
- *Accept and value the fact that NSW is a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse society.*
- *Respect our democratic freedoms to practice our cultural and religious traditions and speak our languages, within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.*
- *Ensure NSW government programs and services, as well as opportunities to participate in public life, are accessible by everyone irrespective of their cultural, linguistic or religious heritage.*
- *Promote and maximise the value of cultural diversity for the social and economic benefit of NSW.*

Paraphrased from the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*



# The Multicultural Principles are the policy of the State

The *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* establishes the Multicultural Principles as the policy of the State. All public authorities are required to observe the Multicultural Principles in the conduct of their affairs. They are also required to report to Multicultural NSW, and in their agency Annual Reports, on progress under the Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP).

The MPSP is a whole-of-government mechanism designed to assist agencies in planning

and improve performance in the delivery of government services in a culturally diverse society. In other words, the MPSP aims to build the cultural competence of the NSW Government.

Under the MPSP, all government agencies must develop a Multicultural Plan with agreed outcomes. The MPSP framework consists of four Focus Areas, with nine outcomes tailored to the business needs and context of the reporting agency.

## The four MPSP focus areas:

### 1. SERVICE DELIVERY

#### OUTCOMES

Mainstream services deliver for everyone. Targeted programs fill the gaps. People know about services and programs through culturally and linguistically effective communications.

### 4. ENGAGEMENT

#### OUTCOMES

Effective collaboration with diverse communities. Understanding the needs of our culturally diverse community.

### 2. PLANNING

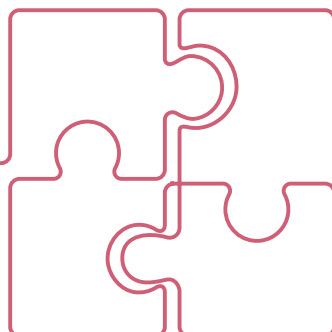
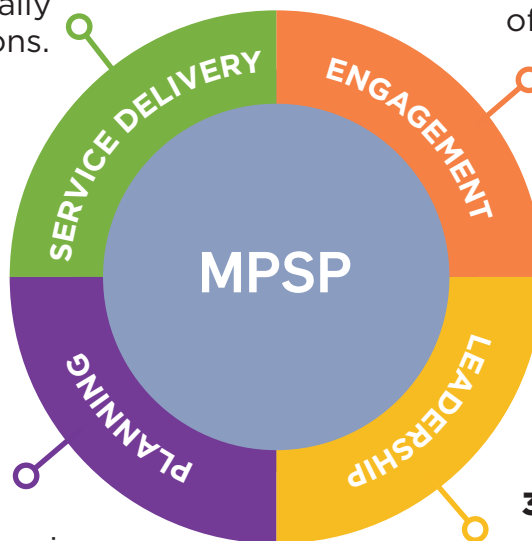
#### OUTCOMES

Strong plans to deliver services. Evidence driven planning.

### 3. LEADERSHIP

#### OUTCOMES

Demonstrated leadership in culturally inclusive practices. Increased recognition of the value of cultural diversity.



## Cultivating Cultural Competence

The MPSP is more than a reporting and assessment framework. Under the MPSP, Multicultural NSW supports good practice in multicultural policy and service delivery by convening the **Multicultural Coordinators' Forum**, a Community of Practice that brings together multicultural practitioners from across government to share expertise and experience, learn from challenges and jointly develop solutions.

A new **MPSP Toolkit** being developed in consultation with the Multicultural Coordinators' Forum will provide resources on good practice in cultural diversity in the areas of staff development and support, cultural and linguistic competence, use of interpreters, emerging technology use and other areas.

The **Cultural Competency Program (CCP)** has been rolled out to many NSW Government agencies as well as commercial and non-profit organisations. CCP provides online training courses and resources designed to cost effectively train large numbers of agency staff in the areas of cultural competence, diversity and inclusion.

The CCP's Cultural Atlas provides useful information to assist agencies in planning and understanding the communities they serve. CCP is a collaboration between Multicultural NSW, SBS and International Education Services (IES).

Multicultural NSW is also developing a new fee-for-service multicultural training pilot program for NSW Government and non-government sectors. Following the pilot program, we will also develop tailor-made training for organisations delivered at the workplace.

Objectives of the multicultural training pilot program are:

- increase cross-cultural competence
- build knowledge, skills and capabilities when delivering services to multicultural communities
- focus on recruitment and leadership to enhance a multicultural workforce.

Based on extensive market research of the training needs of the NSW Government and non-government sectors, the following five key areas of interest will be the focus of our pilot training program:

- introduction to cultural competency
- working effectively with interpreters
- multicultural engagement and communication
- multicultural planning
- leadership in cultural diversity.



# A NSW PUBLIC SECTOR THAT REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES

Under the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*, it is the duty of the heads of all NSW public authorities to ensure their agencies observe and implement the Multicultural Principles.

One of those Principles is that “all institutions should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of NSW as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State”.

The *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* reinforces this Principle. It holds the head of government sector agencies responsible for ensuring that workforce diversity is integrated into their organisation’s workforce planning.

Recognising and realising the potential of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce will deliver better services and better outcomes for our culturally diverse population.

The NSW Government’s *Workforce Profile Report*, produced annually by the Public Service Commission, provides an important insight into the cultural diversity of the public sector.

It is estimated that 18.1% of the NSW public sector’s non-casual workforce in 2020 identified as people who first spoke a language other than English as a child, compared to 18.3% in 2019. While not directly comparable, it is worth noting that 26.5% of the State’s general population identified as speaking a language other than English at home in the 2016 ABS Census.

The proportion of employees in the public sector who identified as being from a racial, ethnic or ethno-religious minority group in 2020 remained consistent with 2019 levels at 12.6%.

The NSW public sector is the largest employer in Australia and employs more people now than at any time since 1999. It is reasonable to expect that, over time, the public sector should come to resemble the community it serves more closely.

Steps are being made in this direction. The highly regarded NSW Graduate Program continues to attract high-calibre talent, with more than 6,000 applications received in 2020 for the 2021 Program. Graduates from households who speak a language other than English make up about 27% of the 150 applicants selected to begin the program in 2021, which is a strong correlation with currently available population data.

In 2016, NSW Secretaries Board committed to employ at least 100 recently arrived refugees across the public sector and the initial target has been met. To date, the NSW Government has employed 163 recently arrived refugees. Some have worked for more than one agency, resulting in 177 positions filled. These include roles as doctors and nurses, bus drivers, engineers, IT specialists, accountants, project and policy officers, human resources advisers, administrative assistants and customer service officers.

Multicultural NSW will continue working with the Public Service Commission on strategies to ensure we keep heading in the right direction.





# Designated MPSP agencies (DMAs)

Designated MPSP agencies (DMAs) are NSW Government agencies that are recognised for their role in delivering essential policies and services for our culturally diverse community. DMAs must update their Multicultural Plans every two or three years and report accordingly.

DMAs reporting to Multicultural NSW for 2019-20 were:



Multicultural NSW assessed all seven of the reporting DMAs for 2019-20 as meeting at least the minimal standards across the four MPSP Focus Areas. The reports also provided examples of initiatives that demonstrate a commitment to good multicultural practice. The next section highlights some of these examples of good practice.



# Designated MPSP Agencies: 2019-20 report highlights

## Making the most of migrant skills: TAFE Digital's Skilled Migrant Employment Program

COVID-19 and the closure of international borders has denied us the boost of new skills and talent that ordinarily helps drive our economy through the migration program. This makes it even more critical now to recognise and capitalise on the existing skills of migrants living in our community.

The Skilled Migrant Employment Program (SMEP) is a tailored skillset course which helps overseas-qualified migrants and refugees to find suitable employment. This TAFE Digital program was developed in partnership with Metro Assist following the success of the SkillME pilot project, which was funded by Multicultural NSW. It has been delivered to more than 120 students in the past two years.

SMEP assists students through the complex process of having their overseas skills and qualifications recognised and obtain gap or further training and local experience through an internship. The SMEP team engaged with various industry groups and employers including the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and recruitment agencies for employment opportunities, contributing to workforce diversity.

This TAFE Digital program and the SkillME project team were finalists for the 2017 NSW Premier's Awards for Public Service. This program has since been widely promoted and attracted new partnerships with Settlement Services International, migrant resource centres and African Women Australia Inc.

## Protecting people's rights: Legal Aid NSW services for migrants and refugees

COVID-19 has left many migrants in a precarious situation with respect to employment. Migrant and refugee women who experience domestic and family violence may have limited awareness of their legal rights. Legal Aid NSW has been delivering programs across the State to improve legal literacy and access to legal services for migrants and refugees.

The Refugee Service is a statewide specialist service of Legal Aid NSW that helps to improve refugees' legal literacy and access to legal services.

The Refugee Service provides legal advice, assistance and representation, and community legal education (CLE). Pre-COVID, CLE included face-to-face presentations, information sessions and workshops, and attendance at community events.

Former client Zara (name changed for privacy reasons) provides a case study of the importance of the service for refugees.

Zara said that the Refugee Service made her feel safe, secure and protected and that her family law solicitor stood by her side when she had nobody else here in Australia to support her.

*"I am victim of domestic violence. The Refugee Service helped me understand that everyone should respect women, that your husband should understand that there is law and Australia*

*is a developed country and as a human being, the woman has the right to live peacefully with no violence and abuse... The Refugee Service kept my violent husband away from me*



*and made me feel important; that I am a woman who is important and has a place in this society. It made me feel that I am a woman living in a country that has rights. [Before] I was living like a slave to serve my husband and my children... I am proud of Legal Aid. They helped me and I say this wherever I go."*



The Migrant Employment Legal Service (MELS) is a statewide project that provides free legal assistance to migrants and temporary visa holders who have been underpaid or unfairly dismissed by their employers.

The service is a joint initiative of four Community Legal Centres (CLCs) that includes Marrickville Legal Centre, Inner City Legal Centre, Redfern Legal Centre and Kingsford Legal Centre. In 2019-20 the MELS provided free legal advice to more than 800 people from 96 different countries of origin and represented more than 150 clients in dispute resolution and court or tribunal proceedings.

Former client Naveen (name changed for privacy purposes) provides a case study that help illustrates the impact of the MELS for its clients.

Naveen is an international student from Nepal completing a degree at TAFE. He worked as a casual car detailer at a car wash to pay off his student fees.

While working at the car wash, Naveen received payslips that did not show the number of hours he worked or the rate at which he was paid. Naveen was unsure of whether his employer was paying him correctly. Also, Naveen's employer deducted \$1,165 from his final pay to cover the costs of repair for a car that was allegedly damaged whilst he was washing it.

MELS provided advice to Naveen that he was covered by the Vehicle, Manufacturing, Repair, Services and Retail Award 2010 and was underpaid a total of \$4,837. MELS assisted Naveen by filing in the Federal Circuit Court of Australia and successfully negotiated a settlement with Naveen's employer. Naveen was able to recover \$3,800, which he is now using to pay off his TAFE fees.

## Education partnerships to improve learning and teaching of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D)

Refugee Action Support Partnerships are a joint initiative of the Department of Education, Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation, Western Sydney University, University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University. In 2019, 180 students studying teaching at university tutored more than 350 refugee students through this program. Tutors provided homework support and assistance with academic language and literacy to students in seven high schools and eight primary schools.



In 2019, Victoria Avenue Public School in Concord West participated in the Leading EAL/D Education program, implementing an action research project aimed at building teacher capacity to effectively plan and teach to better meet the English language learning needs of their EAL/D students. The project team included two specialist EAL/D teachers, one of whom was also a member of the school executive staff, and a classroom teacher.

As part of the project, teaching staff across the school participated in a range of EAL/D professional learning. All staff took part in the Using the EAL/D learning progression course. K-2 teachers and specialist staff undertook professional learning on explicit vocabulary teaching led by academic Dr Paul Dufficy and on explicit grammar teaching with academic Joanne Rossbridge. Three professional learning sessions, run by the leadership project team, used the research of Dr Paul Dufficy and Pauline Gibbons to assist all staff explore second language acquisition and translate theory into quality EAL/D practice.

The project targeted deepening and strengthening understanding of the elements of quality EAL/D pedagogy and practice and contributed to the creation of learning opportunities that have high intellectual quality. As a result of the project, teachers developed a greater understanding of the EAL/D Learning Progressions and how they can be used effectively to identify students' English language learning needs.

Participating teachers reported an increase in EAL/D student engagement and deeper student learning.

## Health service planning for a culturally and linguistically diverse population

COVID-19 has highlighted the vital importance of ensuring that public health policy and planning recognise and reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of our population.

Local Health Districts (LHD) lie at the heart of their communities and were the frontline of the COVID-19 response. This was supported by local knowledge of communities that has been developed over time and embedded in many LHD plans, policies and advisory structures.

The South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) Multicultural Health Stakeholders Advisory Committee includes consumers and representatives from councils, multicultural community organisations and key services and programs across SESLHD. The committee was consulted on the development of the SESLHD Carers Strategy 2019-2022, the SESLHD Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities 2019-2023; the Review of the 2016 Needs and Assets Assessment of New and Emerging Communities project, the SESLHD Environmental Sustainability Plan, the Health Literacy and Medication Management Plan for Multicultural Health Week in 2020, and information and service needs for the COVID-19 response.

The South West Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) Planning Unit has given special consideration to cultural and linguistic diversity in all district planning and strategy documents, including the SWSLHD Research Strategy to 2023, South Western Sydney Diabetes Framework to 2026, the draft SWS Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan to 2025 and the SWSLHD Equity Framework to 2025, which focuses on measuring health indicators in Australian and non-Australian born populations in the District.



## SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT'S LE TAEAO AFUA (LTA) – 'A NEW DAWN'.

The program was a diabetes prevention pilot project that delivered a church-based lifestyle intervention program in English and Samoan with three churches in South Western Sydney. It included diabetes peer support within the church community, with volunteers trained as facilitators and empowered to drive healthy lifestyle and diabetes messages. Activity is under way to scale up the program with SWSLHD Population Health and services from other districts. Initial planning for the Pasifika Preventing Diabetes Programme (PPDP) involves Pasifika church leaders and church communities across Campbelltown and Macarthur. Churches in Fijian, Cook Islands, Samoan and Tongan-speaking communities have all agreed to participate. The LTA model of bilingual delivery and peer support will be key elements of the upscaled PPDP program.



## Ask Dr Jan: cross-agency collaboration in a time of crisis.

Dr Jan Fizzell MB BS BSc (Med) (Hons) MPH FAFPHM is a public health physician working as a Senior Medical Advisor in the Office of the Chief Health Officer at the Ministry of Health. Her first role in the ministry many years ago was in pandemic preparedness and she assisted with communications and vaccine roll-out during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009. She has now spent over 12 months with the NSW Health COVID-19 response teams assisting the community, clinicians and other government agencies understand the latest information and effective ways to prevent the spread.

Dr Fizzell is the voice and face of the popular Ask Dr Jan video series posted throughout the pandemic on the NSW Health Facebook page to answer questions from young people and the broader community about COVID-19.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Dr Fizzell has also joined the CEO of Multicultural NSW, Joseph La Posta, in scores of online community engagement forums designed to empower community and religious leaders with the latest public health information and enlist the support of communities in stopping the spread.

Between March and December 2020, this included 40 online engagement forums involving more than 150 religious leaders from more than 100 faith groups. In August 2020, Dr Fizzell appeared alongside Mr La Posta in a special webinar on Faith Communities and Inter-Faith Cooperation During COVID-19 hosted by Affinity Intercultural Foundation and facilitated by Phillipa McDonald from ABC News. The webinar discussed the situation and the pandemic's impacts on faith communities, sharing insights on the important role of religious leaders and inter-faith cooperation during this time. The webinar reached more than 73,000 people on Facebook.

Dr Fizzell's personal and professional commitment and her responsiveness to the needs of our culturally, linguistically and

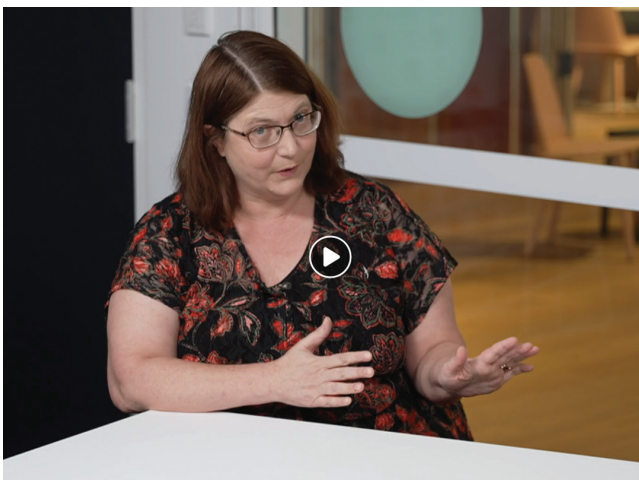
religiously diverse community are reflective of the broader commitment of the NSW public service throughout the pandemic. This commitment was also expressed in the form of new relationships and new partnerships that saw agencies work more closely together.

Multicultural NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Customer Service worked together to ensure that public health information was available in community languages and communicated through the most appropriate community networks and channels.

Multicultural NSW translated nearly 1,600 NSW Health and NSW Government documents on COVID-19 into 52 languages. We worked side-by-side in deploying interpreters to Sydney Airport and in supporting Service NSW to communicate with Australians returning from overseas.

We translated the NSW Government's Help Us Save Lives campaign into 12 languages and worked with the Department of Customer Service, Multicultural Health Communications Service, and Local Health Districts to support an integrated campaign informed by multicultural expertise and insights and community experience.

Hopefully, these new relationships, forged in a time of crisis, will create new opportunities to embed cultural diversity capability across the NSW Government into the future.



▲ Dr Jan Fizzell's video series: *Ask Dr Jan*



## MULTICULTURAL NSW COVID-19 SUPPORT MARCH 2020-JANUARY 2021

### SUPPORT TO NEW & EMERGING COMMUNITIES

- **\$4M** FOR VULNERABLE TEMPORARY VISA HOLDERS THROUGH **34** SPECIALIST MIGRANT AND SETTLEMENT NGO'S
- **\$4M** FOR THE CONTINUATION OF REFUGEE PROGRAMS
- **\$2M** FOR EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND THE ASYLUM SEEKER SECTOR IN NSW
- SUPPORTED **STUDY NSW** IN SECURING **\$20M** FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### SUPPORT TO BROADER MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY

- **\$600,000** OF QUICK SUPPORT GRANTS TO **120** ORGANISATIONS WORKING AT THE GRASS ROOTS

### LANGUAGE SUPPORT

- TRANSLATED CONTENT IN **52** LANGUAGES
- **1,569** DOCUMENTS AND **430,323** WORDS TRANSLATED
- COVERED THE COST OF MULTILINGUAL TRANSLATIONS FOR ESSENTIAL NSW SERVICES
- SUPPORTED SERVICE NSW WITH INTERPRETERS TO CONTACT AUSTRALIANS RETURNING FROM OVERSEAS TRAVEL
- SUPPORTED NSW HEALTH WITH INTERPRETERS AT SYDNEY AIRPORT
- SUPPORTED THE NSW GOVERNMENT **HELP US SAVE LIVES** ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN IN **12** LANGUAGES

### SOCIAL COHESION

- NSW COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND RESPONSE PLAN (COMPLAN) CONVENED **6** OUT-OF-SESSION SESSIONS
- REMOVE HATE FROM THE DEBATE CAMPAIGN REACHED OVER **400,000** PEOPLE AND ACHIEVED OVER **31,000** ENGAGEMENTS

### ENGAGEMENT

- **37** ONLINE ENGAGEMENT FORUMS, WITH **150** RELIGIOUS LEADERS REPRESENTING OVER **100** DIFFERENT FAITHS
- **9** FORUMS WITH MUSLIM LEADERS DURING RAMADAN
- **50** ONLINE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FORUMS ACROSS **8** REGIONAL AREAS
  - JOINT RAC WITH **137** MEMBERS
- **18** FORUMS WITH PEAK MULTICULTURAL BODIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS
- **6** NSW CONSULAR CORP FORUMS
- WEEKLY DIALOGUE WITH DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS
- **16** MEETINGS WITH LEADERS FROM THE HUMANITARIAN AND SETTLEMENT SECTOR

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> [https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/downloadable\\_resources/UR/Social-Cohesion-Handbook.pdf](https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/downloadable_resources/UR/Social-Cohesion-Handbook.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> This report covers some events and refers to some data sources that occurred or were collected outside of the 2019-20 financial year but within the 2020 calendar year. This is because some reports like the COMPLAN Committee report and the Scanlon Foundation survey report on a calendar year basis. Given the focus of this year's Community Relations Report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also considered important to include relevant information from later in the 2020 calendar year.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/toolkit/Community-Recovery-Toolkit-Spontaneous-Volunteers.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/migration-trends-highlights-2019-20.PDF>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Budget%20Paper%20No.%201%20-%20Budget%20State-ment%20-%202020-21%20Budget\\_1.pdf](https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Budget%20Paper%20No.%201%20-%20Budget%20Statement%20-%202020-21%20Budget_1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/covid-19-resource-hub/onshore-student-sentiment-tracker/onshore-stu-dent-sentiment-tracker>

<sup>7</sup> <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/SC2020%20Report%20Final.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The July survey was completed by 3,090 respondents, the November survey by 2,790. In large measure the views of the same respondents were tracked over the second half of the year, as 94% (2,613) of the November respondents had also completed the July survey. <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/SC2020%20Report%20Final.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> As the COMPLAN Committee reports on a calendar year basis, some of the activities reported here fall outside of the 2019-20 reporting year for the Community Relations Report.



Multicultural  
NSW



Multicultural NSW  
Level 8, 56 Station St East  
Parramatta NSW 2150

P.O. Box 618  
Parramatta NSW 2124

T: 02 8255 6767

ABN 79 863 510 875

[multicultural.nsw.gov.au](http://multicultural.nsw.gov.au)