

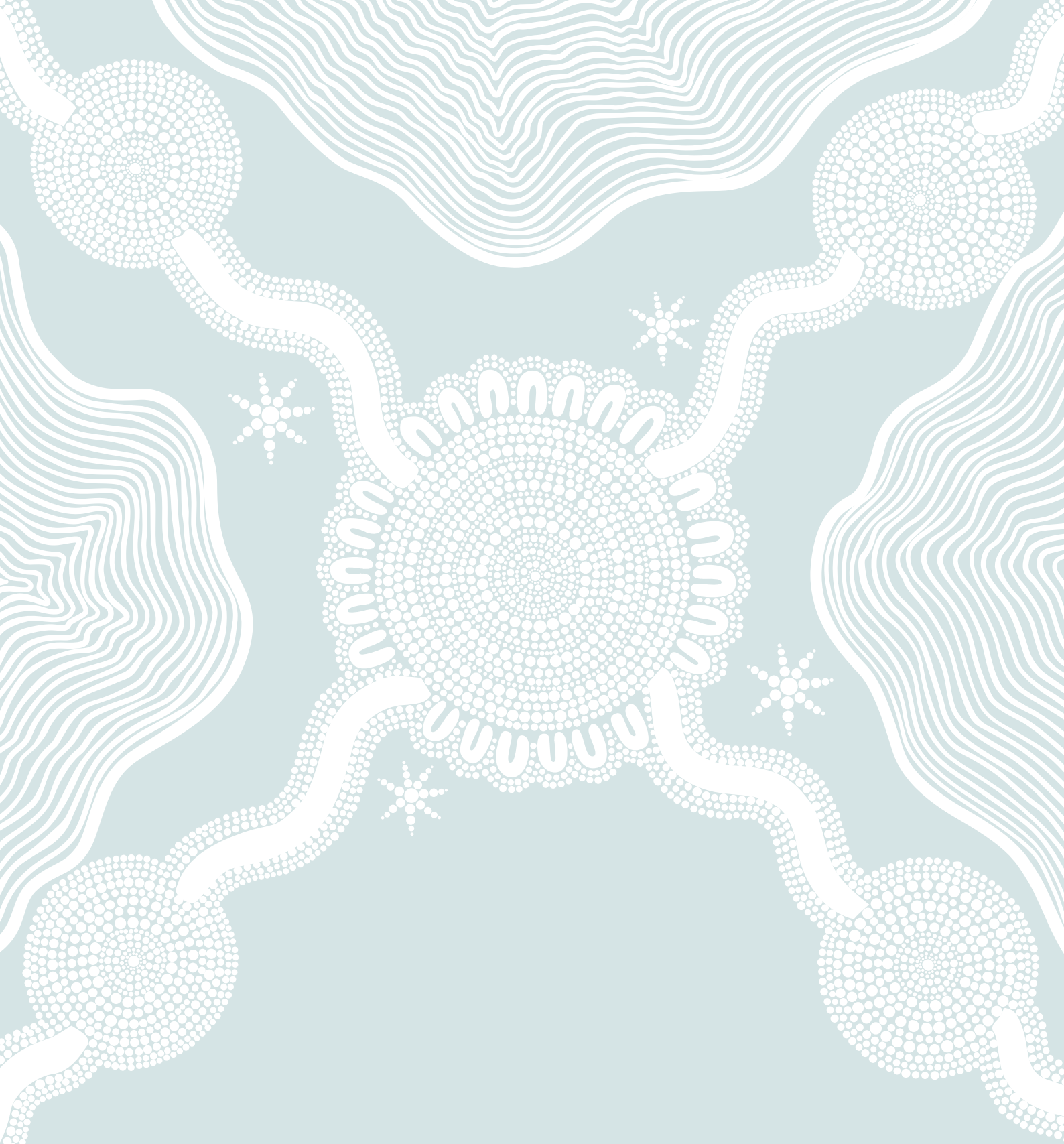


Multicultural NSW

COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT 2025



STRONGER *together*



Acknowledgement of Country

Multicultural NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, skies and waterways of this state. We pay respect to the Elders past, present and future of all Aboriginal nations. As Australia's First People, they have an important role to play in shaping the identity of our state.

The artwork on this page is taken from the Multicultural NSW Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and was created by artist Rheanna Lotter. The artwork represents the commitment, inclusion, diversity and strength between Multicultural NSW and the wider community.

A note on terminology

In this report, the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘culturally diverse’ (or its variants, ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’, or ‘culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse’) are reserved to describe the society of NSW, or Australia, as a whole—as in ‘Australia is a multicultural society’, or ‘the people of NSW are culturally diverse’.

This is consistent with the language of the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*, which defines ‘cultural diversity’ as ‘the different linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds of the people of NSW’, and which ‘promotes the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of NSW within a cohesive and multicultural society’.

To the best extent possible, terms used to describe particular communities or groups of people are in plain English (not acronyms) and are appropriate to the context at hand, which in a multicultural society may relate to culture, language, religion, migrant or refugee history, or any other term that suitably recognises the identity, experience and context of the people being described. In this sense, our terminology should be as diverse as the people we serve and responsive to the different contexts in which we live and work within a culturally diverse society.

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Submission Letter



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To whom it may concern,

It is a pleasure to submit the 2025 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 New South Wales (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 as the policy of the state, across the NSW public sector and in the community we serve.

The Multicultural Principles enshrined in the Act lay the foundations for a cohesive multicultural society. In essence, the Multicultural Principles call on public authorities and the people of New South Wales 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 practise 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.

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.

This report covers some events and refers to some data sources that occurred or were collected outside of the 2024-25 financial year but within the 2025 calendar year. This is because some key data sources are issued on a calendar year basis. This also provides continuity with preceding editions of the Community Relations Report that reported on a calendar year basis.

2025 ended with the horrific terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December, taking 15 innocent lives and injuring many more. This report pays tribute to the victims, to the resilience of the Jewish Australian community, and to the immense outpouring of sympathy and goodwill that the people of NSW expressed for their Jewish sisters and brothers.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the substantive CEO of Multicultural NSW throughout the year, and especially in response to the Bondi terrorist attack in his role as Co-Coordinator General, Bondi Community Response. Mr La Posta's appointment to the role is a testament to the trust that the NSW Government has in the work of Mr La Posta and Multicultural NSW.

I thank all the community members, researchers, agencies and organisations who have contributed insights to this report. I thank and acknowledge the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board for providing its expertise and insights, and for providing valued advice and support to the agency throughout the year.

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



James Jegasothy
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Multicultural NSW



Statement from the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board

It is with great solemnity that we must introduce this year's Community Relations Report by acknowledging the tragic loss of 15 innocent lives on 14 December 2025 at Bondi Beach. For many of us, 2025 sadly will be remembered for the way it ended, with the worst terrorist attack ever on Australian soil, an antisemitic terror attack that followed a series of antisemitic incidents throughout the year. This unspeakable act of violence targeting our Australian Jewish community came at a time of year when the community should be coming together to celebrate the start of Chanukah with family and friends. We offer this statement in remembrance of the victims, their families, and everyone impacted by this terrible event.

We also remember the remarkable ways in which the people of NSW stood united in sympathy, compassion, and solidarity with our Jewish community. Our message was clear: when someone attacks one part of our Australian community, they attack the very fibre of our Australian society, and we stand united as a multicultural community with our Jewish brothers and sisters. Inspired by these powerful expressions of unity, we remain steadfast in our commitment to peace, humanity, and to each other as Australians. We will not let hatred and violence divide us.

We are proud of the role played by Multicultural NSW in response to the Bondi attack in supporting the Jewish community and promoting unity. The appointment of Joseph La Posta, CEO of Multicultural NSW, as the Co-Coordinator General for the Bondi Community Response is testament to the role that he and the agency played in the immediate response to the attack.

As we were reminded several times throughout 2025, we must remain vigilant to threats to community harmony. From neo-Nazis rallying outside the NSW Parliament to offensive racist stunts inside the Federal Parliament, there are individuals who seek to create division, instil fear, spread hate, and erode social harmony. We have seen how hateful and racist scapegoating, especially prevalent online, has real-world effects in the form of increased reports of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, with innocent women and children often suffering the abuse. Racism, religious intolerance, hate and extremism have no home in NSW. Targeting any community because of their faith, culture or language is abhorrent. NSW is a

place where people from every part of the world can find a home and thrive. Every person in our state has the right to feel safe. We must continue to work together to uphold respect, understanding, and unity within our communities.

Community safety is a collective responsibility. In May 2025, when members of our Chinese Australian community were feeling vulnerable after unprovoked acts of violence in Sydney, it was important to bring the community together with the NSW Police Force, Multicultural NSW and NSW Government departments to allay fears and ensure the community that NSW remains a place where everyone feels safe, valued and respected. Our Chair, Simon Chan AM, played a key leadership role during this time. We continue to emphasise the importance of law enforcement collaboration with communities, ensuring that public safety efforts are culturally informed and community-centred.

NSW is a proudly multicultural and multi-faith society. Yet as we witnessed in August 2025, with thousands attending an anti-immigration rally in Sydney, and where neo-Nazi propaganda was being circulated targeting our Indian and other communities, there is clearly more work to do to counter misinformation and disinformation about migration and multiculturalism. While we can have legitimate debates about migration levels, these should be informed by facts, not fearmongering. We hope the data presented in this report supports more civil and informed conversations.

As a multicultural society, we are connected to every part of the world, and events that happen overseas can directly impact communities locally. Some of these events receive widespread media

attention and give rise to local activism, such as the ongoing wars in Gaza and Ukraine. But we must also recognise that our communities are impacted by conflicts in Sudan, Congo and the DRC, political strife and regime change in Syria or Bangladesh, the Gen Z youth revolutions in South and South East Asia and beyond. In an increasingly uncertain world, there will always be community members in NSW who are affected by overseas events and who may need support.

This means the work of Multicultural NSW must always be informed by a global perspective, while remaining steadfastly focused on the needs of local communities. It must be informed by evidence and data, and this report presents just some of the evidence that informs the agency's work. Most importantly, it must be informed by community insights, and this is where the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board makes a critical contribution to the work of the agency.

As members of the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board, we each bring our own expertise and community experience to bear on the complex issues that Multicultural NSW must work through every day. We also proactively engage with communities throughout the state in our roles as Regional Community Network (RCN) chairs and by representing Multicultural NSW at community programs and events. Our networks help to ensure

the work of the agency is informed by current community insights.

Throughout 2025, we were closely involved in the development of the new Multicultural NSW strategic plan 2026-2030. This report presents the key themes that emerged through consultations with RCNs and with the Advisory Board itself on the strategic direction of Multicultural NSW to 2030. The plan does not baulk at the challenges we face over the next five years. Arguably, the role of Multicultural NSW is more important now than it has been in the five decades of the agency's proud history. Our commitment and our task now is to advise and guide the agency to help meet these challenges and make NSW an even better place to live in the future.

As this report clearly documents, 2025 was a difficult year for many people in our community. But the Community Relations Report does not only record the challenges we faced over the year. It also shows how communities and government have worked together to find solutions and how, despite the challenges, NSW remains a strong, resilient and cohesive society. The report also demonstrates why we need an agency like Multicultural NSW, and why the agency must continue to be supported in its unique and important work.

We commend the 2025 Community Relations Report to the Parliament of New South Wales.



Members of the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board with The Hon. Steve Kamper MP, Minister for Multiculturalism (back row, centre) and James Jegasothy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW (far right)

About the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board

The Multicultural NSW Advisory Board is an independent statutory body established under the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* (the Act) to provide expert advice and guidance to Multicultural NSW and the Minister for Multiculturalism. Our role is to ensure that the Multicultural Principles remain embedded in government policies and services while strengthening community harmony, inclusion, and social cohesion.

The Advisory Board plays a key role in shaping multicultural policy and community engagement strategies by leveraging expertise across government, academia, business, and community leadership. As one of our statutory functions under the Act, we provide advice to Multicultural NSW on the annual Community Relations Report, the agency's independent report to Parliament on the state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity.

Members of the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board

(as of December 2025)



Simon Chan AM
Chair



Joseph La Posta
CEO



David Giang



Elfa Moraitakis



Janice Rodrigues
Youth Member



Julie Lim



Khushaal Vyas



Malaemie Fruean OAM



Omer Incekara OAM



Polina Bilinsky Mycak
Youth Member



Ramneek Singh



Rosemary Kariuki OAM



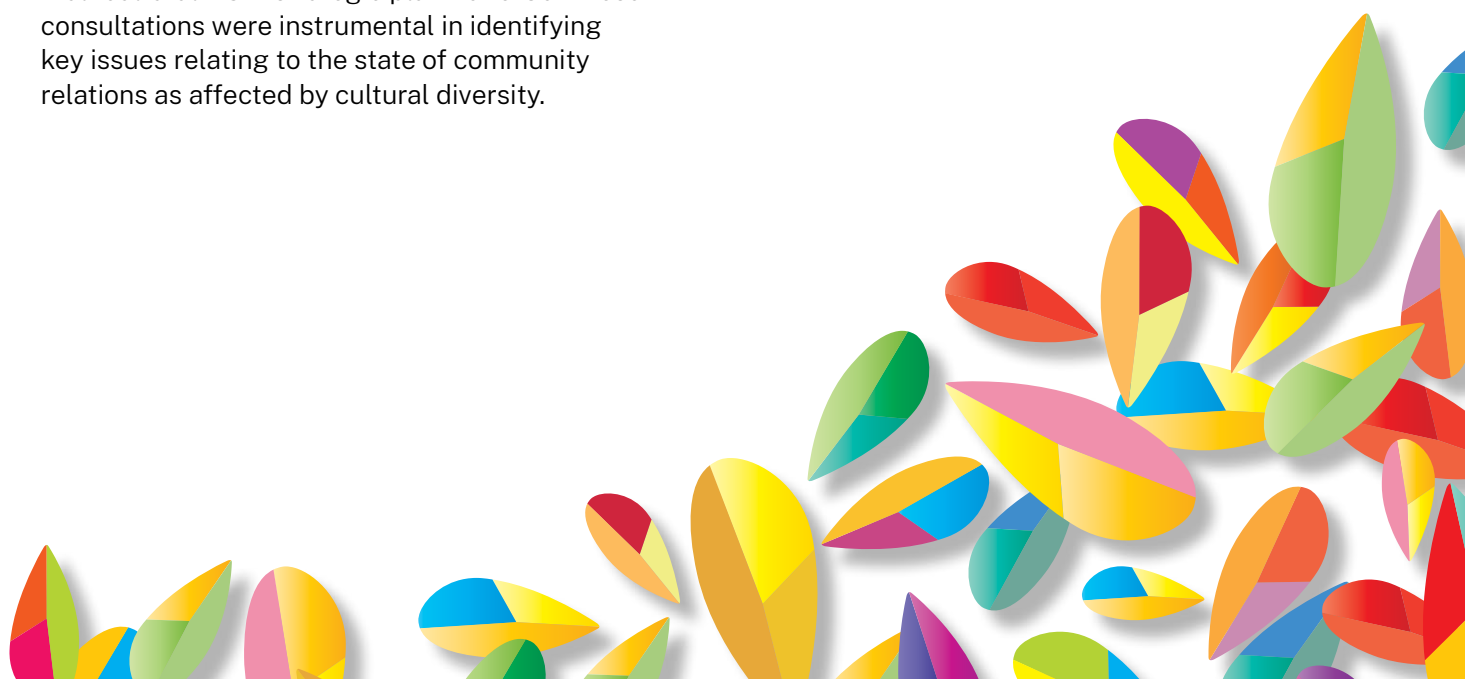
Dr Saba Nabi OAM



Sonia Sadiq Gandhi

Acknowledgements

- Multicultural NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways of NSW and pays respect to Aboriginal leaders past and present.
- Multicultural NSW acknowledges the advice and counsel of the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board under the leadership of its Chair, Nick Kaldas APM (until his resignation in March 2025) and Chair, Simon Chan AM (from his appointment in August 2025 to the present).
- This report draws on data from the 2021 Census by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other ABS data sets.
- This report summarises some of the key findings of the 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion report by the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. The Scanlon report has provided valuable insights for the Community Relations Report over several years.
- Multicultural NSW thanks its research partners at the Australian National University (ANU). Professor Kate Reynolds and Dr Benjamin Jones have led an interdisciplinary team at ANU and worked with an international expert reference group to design the NSW Community Relations Survey for Multicultural NSW. In this report, we present key findings from the third NSW Community Relations Survey conducted in late 2025.
- Multicultural NSW thanks the more than 600 community members, including Multicultural NSW Regional Engagement Program (REP) participants from 10 regions, who participated in consultations on the development of the new Multicultural NSW strategic plan 2026-30. These consultations were instrumental in identifying key issues relating to the state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity.
- The NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) Committee met throughout 2025 to identify, assess, monitor and address issues impacting community harmony. A report on the COMPLAN Committee's activities for 2025 is included within this report and is endorsed by all member agencies. It provides an important source of information about the state of community relations as assessed by member agencies. Multicultural NSW acknowledges the contributions of all COMPLAN members and advisers from the NSW Police Force, Anti-Discrimination NSW, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, NSW Reconstruction Authority, Local Government NSW, and the NSW Premier's Department. Several other NSW agencies also contributed as advisers through the year.
- Multicultural NSW thanks all the agencies, organisations, researchers and community members who contributed to this edition of the Community Relations Report.
- The Hon. Steve Kamper MP, Minister for Multiculturalism, provided leadership, stewardship and advocacy for the work of Multicultural NSW throughout 2025. The Minister and Multicultural NSW have also been ably supported in our work by the staff of the Minister's Office. The contents of this report nevertheless reflect the agency's independent advice.



The state of community relations in New South Wales 2025

Our community resilience was tested in 2025 by a series of distressing events and crises, from rising hate incidents to the worst terrorist attack on Australian soil. Yet despite the efforts of divisive elements to threaten community harmony, and contrary to some public commentary, there is strong evidence that NSW remains a cohesive multicultural society.

‘Heartbreak and resilience’: Honouring the victims and heroes of the Bondi terrorist attack

The antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025 marked a tragic end to an already challenging year for communities and community relations.

The attack targeted the Jewish Australian community while it was celebrating the first night of Chanukah, the festival of light. Fifteen innocent people were killed, and 42 more were injured.

As Multicultural NSW has observed over many years, our resilience in the face of hate and extremism can be measured by the way we respond to this threat as a unified, inclusive and democratic society.¹ This resilience was demonstrated in the immediate community response to the Bondi terrorist attack.

First, we must acknowledge the remarkable resilience of the Jewish Australian community in the face of such trauma. Recognising this does not diminish the deep pain and fear felt by the community in the wake of this tragedy. As one Jewish leader told Multicultural NSW in the days after the event:



We are resilient but shaken.

For some individuals affected by this tragedy, resilience will lead to a natural process of recovery. For others, especially the immediate families and loved ones of victims, the tragic reality is they may never fully recover from this attack. But as a community, Jewish Australians will be even stronger after this targeted attack on their identity and people.

¹ Multicultural NSW COMPACT Program and Grants Information 2024-2028



Flower tributes and a message of resilience outside the Bondi Pavillion.

Photo credit: Elizabeth McFarlane, Multicultural NSW.

“The Jewish people have long drawn strength from courage, solidarity and hope, so aptly demonstrated in the story of Chanukah. Even in moments of darkness, we come together to grieve and to reaffirm our shared commitment to dignity and understanding,” said the President of the Sydney Jewish Museum, Greg Shand AM, in ‘A message of heartbreak and resilience’ issued on the night of the attack.

Second, we acknowledge the courage and resilience of first responders and bystanders. Two police officers were injured in the attack. Police, paramedics, doctors, nurses, surf lifeguards, SES volunteers and chaplains all played a key role in the immediate response

Then there were the heroes who put their own lives on the line to save others. Fourteen-year-old Chaya Dadon, who was celebrating Chanukah with her family and community, shielded other children with her body during the attack and sustained injuries. Syrian-born 43-year-old Ahmed Al Ahmed, a Muslim Australian bystander, became a national and international hero after wrestling a gun away from one of the terrorists and receiving several gunshot wounds in the process.

At a December vigil for the victims, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies President David Ossip paid tribute to Mr Ahmed, “whose unbelievable bravery saved so many lives,” before sharing a message from Ahmed, who was still recovering in hospital:

“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted. Today, I stand with you, my brothers and sisters.”

Third, the response from the broader community must be recognised as a powerful demonstration of our resilience as a multicultural society. As a sign of our strength in the face of adversity, the people of NSW spoke with one voice – across cultural, linguistic and religious differences – when it came to expressing sympathy and solidarity with victims and the Jewish Australian community.

Muslim organisations were among the first to express their sympathy and solidarity. The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) issued a statement on the night of the attack.

“We stand in solidarity with the Australian Jewish community, the victims and their families, and all

those affected. We extend our support and deepest sympathies to the Jewish community during this difficult time,” it said.

The NSW Faith Affairs Council and the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board responded in a joint statement, also issued on the night of the attack.

“In the face of this tragedy, we call on the people of New South Wales to remain steadfast in our commitment to peace, humanity, and to each other as Australians,” the statement read.

The NSW Ecumenical Council called on all people in NSW “to stand together in solidarity and remain steadfast in rejecting violence and resisting fear and division...Chanukah reminds us that light shines only when love and justice prevail.”

The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy joined the multi-faith message of unity and solidarity.

“We stand in support of Australia’s Jewish community and call upon all faith communities to come together in mourning, dialogue, and resolve against extremism in all forms,” it said.

In the words of one Jewish community leader, the “unbelievable support” expressed by the wider community was a great source of hope and strength for the Jewish Australian community at this most difficult time.

The challenge ahead will be maintaining this sense of solidarity after the tragedy of Bondi and building on the goodwill of the people of NSW to make us a stronger, more cohesive multicultural society into the future



Rabbi Ben Elton from The Great Synagogue and Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, Grand Mufti of Australia, at a vigil for Bondi victims at St Mary’s Cathedral.
Photo credit: Giovanni Portelli Photography/
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

CASE STUDY

Light over darkness: five million acts of kindness to honour Bondi victims

The Bondi terrorist attack has had an immense impact on our community, especially our Jewish community. The day after the attack, the NSW Faith Affairs Council held an emergency session to bring together faith leaders from across the spectrum of our society to show their unambiguous support for our Jewish brothers and sisters.

This expanded NSW Faith Affairs Council meeting was joined by two Jewish religious leaders, Rabbi Nochum Schapiro of Chabad House and Rabbi Benjamin Elton of the Great Synagogue.

When asked what faith communities could do to help the Jewish community, Rabbi Nochum Schapiro responded with two requests.

One, to stand with our Jewish community and show unambiguous support.

And two, do one *mitzvah*. An act of kindness or charity. To bring some light into the world.

In support of the Rabbi's request, the NSW Faith Affairs Council, with support from Multicultural NSW and the NSW Government, launched the #OneMitzvahforBondi campaign.

The campaign asked all Australians to undertake one act of kindness, compassion or charity, and to share their good deed with the wider community. A small of kindness to others could be:

- volunteering
- donating
- giving blood
- calling someone you haven't spoken to in a while
- buying a neighbour a coffee
- supporting those in need.

Members of the public were asked to share their good deeds by using #OneMitzvahforBondi or visiting: nsw.gov.au/oneitzvah. Rabbi Schapiro set an ambitious goal for the campaign. He hoped that five million Australians would share their small act of kindness with the world.

Chair of the NSW Faith Affairs Council, The Right Rev. Dr Michael Stead, said the multi-faith Council unanimously endorsed and strongly backed the campaign.

"At the core of our faith communities is a commitment to love and compassion," he said.

"The NSW Faith Affairs Council encourages everyone to take part in the One Mitzvah for Bondi campaign, to spread warmth and kindness to our fellow Australians.

"I would like to sincerely thank our Jewish leaders for their grace and guidance during this unfathomable period of grief," he said.

President of the Rabbinical Council of NSW, Rabbi Shua Solomon spoke of the meaning of the campaign for Jewish Australians.

"This unspeakable horror has touched every Jew and every Australian. Our only response to this profound darkness can be with light.

"We ask every Australian to honour the memory of our lost not only with words but with action, unity and faith –by doing good," he said.

Safeguarding social cohesion against foreign and domestic threats

ASIO did not change the national terrorism threat level after the Bondi attack, stating that investigations were ongoing into other possible threats with similar intent.² The threat level remains at 'probable', as it has been since August 2024, and as it was for most of the 10 years before then.

Beyond the threat of terrorism, though, ASIO Director General Mike Burgess has been speaking increasingly about 'threats to social cohesion'. This was a recurring theme of his statements in 2025, including his annual threat assessment in February and his Lowy Lecture in November. It has also become an increasingly common, if contested, theme in political and public discourse over the past few years.

These so-called 'threats to social cohesion' can be foreign or domestic, criminally violent or just below the threshold of breaking the law – 'awful but lawful', as Burgess has said. They can also blur the line between these categories. Their common aim is to incite fear, hate and discord in society. The threat is not to life and limb as such, but to the social fabric itself, and to our democratic freedoms and institutions. These divisive forces often tear at the more fragile strands of the social fabric, seeking to exploit existing tensions and incite public outrage to achieve their disruptive ends.

Antisemitic attacks strike fear into Jewish community

Unfortunately, we faced several such threats to social cohesion in 2025. A series of antisemitic arson and vandal attacks on Jewish properties and synagogues in Sydney and Melbourne terrorised the Jewish Australian community over the 2024-25 summer. In January, police were alerted to a suspicious caravan at a property in Dural, discovering it was filled with explosives and contained a note referring to the Great Synagogue in Sydney. That the Australian Federal Police found this was a "fabricated terrorist plot... concocted by criminals who wanted to cause fear for personal benefit"³ was little comfort to the Jewish Australian community: their fear was real, even if this plot was not. Whatever the intent, the felt impact was the same.

In August, ASIO announced the findings of its investigation into attacks on Jewish properties in

Sydney and Melbourne earlier in the year. It found that, in at least two cases, possibly more, the individuals who carried them out were low-level criminals with no ideological or antisemitic intent – their motivation was money, not hate. However, the shocking part of the announcement was that these attacks were foreign interference operations orchestrated at a distance, through complex layers of international "cut-outs", by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and commissioned by local organised crime networks. Burgess said this was "perhaps the most egregious example of a nation state trying to unpick our social fabric".⁴ The Australian Government expelled the Iranian Ambassador and listed the IRGC as a terrorist organisation.

From a community relations perspective, it is hard to know what to make of this case. On the one hand, it is shocking that a foreign state has perpetrated attacks on Australian soil. On the other hand, it is arguably a cause for some relief that these were not domestic acts of hatred committed by Australians against Australians. From a Jewish community perspective, none of that really matters, because the fear and the impact are the same. After a summer of Jewish neighbourhoods being targeted, with the controversial exposure in February of online antisemitic threats made by nurses employed at a Sydney hospital (see page 45 on the comprehensive response from NSW Health to this sickening incident), and with Jewish organisations recording rising incidents of antisemitism,⁵ the fear in the Jewish community was real and acutely felt. The Bondi terrorist attack in December was the dreadful realisation of the worst of all these fears.

Anti-Muslim hate is a problem for everyone

The Muslim community, among the first to express its sympathies and solidarity with the Jewish community after the Bondi attack, knows this feeling all too well. Bondi was the worst terrorist attack on Australia soil. The terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, which claimed 51 innocent lives, was the worst terrorist attack ever committed by an Australian. This is not to weigh one tragedy against another. It is simply to acknowledge where hate in its most extreme form can lead.

Understandably, the Christchurch attack still weighs heavily on the Muslim community in NSW, especially when, in March 2025, during the holy month of Ramadan, a comment posted to a newly opened Sydney mosque's social media page threatened to "christ church 2.0 this joint". A 16-year-old in Western

² <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/asio-on-alert-for-further-threats-after-bondi-shooting-leaves-terror-level-at-probable-20251214-p5nnll.html>

³ <https://www.afp.gov.au/news-centre/media-statement/afp-deputy-commissioner-national-security-krissy-barrett-statement>

⁴ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/2025-lowy-lecture-delivered-director-general-security-mike-burgess-am>

⁵ <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Report-Anti-Jewish-Incidents-Australia-2025.pdf>

...perhaps the most egregious example of a nation state trying to unpick our social fabric.

Director General ASIO

Australia was quickly arrested over the online threat. Again, the threat may have been unrealistic, but the fear was real.

This is also only one among many incidents in a rising pattern of anti-Muslim hate. Muslims already suffer by far the highest rates of negative sentiment directed towards any faith group (see page 28). There is also clear evidence that anti-Muslim hate is impacting community safety, especially the safety of Muslim women, who are disproportionately the target of abuse and violence.⁶

Every person in NSW should be free to practise their faith in safety. This is a fundamental freedom and right in any secular democracy. Debates about freedom of speech too often ignore the impact that hate can have on impacted individuals' freedom to live, and to practise their culture and faith, safely and without fear.

This is one way in which threats to social cohesion are also threats to democracy. Anti-Muslim hate, like any form of hate, is a problem for all of us.

Neo-Nazis subvert the law and provoke outrage

ASIO singled out two Australian-based organisations in 2025 that, while not meeting a criminal threshold, were nevertheless assessed as presenting domestic threats to social cohesion. One was the hardline Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation that has been banned or legally restricted in several countries but has not broken any laws in Australia. The other was the neo-Nazi group the National Socialist Network (NSN), whose activities have consistently tested the boundaries of the law, and which even boldly announced intentions during the year to register as a political party. Both organisations maintain affiliations with international extremist movements. While seemingly at different ends of the ideological spectrum, both organisations use similar tactics, and both share the principal trait of antisemitic hate.

The white supremacist NSN was brazenly active in 2025. Its members attracted significant public attention when they appeared unmasked and uniformed at the anti-immigration 'March for Australia' rally in August. While the rally undoubtedly included people expressing genuine (if sometimes misinformed) concerns about migration levels (see page 23), the presence of racist extremists—people who openly described themselves to the media as Nazis, and who seemingly collaborated with rally organisers—raises serious concerns about the infiltration of extremism into populist political movements. The blatantly racist pamphlets and flyers being circulated at the rally, including material which singled out the Indian Australian community for racist scapegoating (see

⁶ <https://islamophobia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Islamophobia-in-Australia-Report-5.pdf>

page 46), clearly showed there were elements involved with no intention of having a reasoned debate about migration levels.

The NSN's strategy of testing the limits of the law and public discourse was clearly on display, along with its thinly veiled Nazi symbols and antisemitic slogans, at a rally outside the NSW Parliament in November. According to media reports, NSN's Form 1 application to the NSW Police Force to hold the rally was deviously legalistic, effectively tying the hands of police to allow the rally to proceed. The short, disciplined protest was widely covered by the media. Public and political outrage over the incident, while justified, was also predictable, and fed the sense of notoriety that the NSN wants to project as part of its extremist recruitment strategy.

This is a clear example of the kind of threat to social cohesion that ASIO has described. Exploiting existing divisions, manipulating legal and democratic processes, provoking outrage, polarising opinion and pushing the window of legitimate political discourse. All within the boundaries of the law.

The NSW Government has responded to such threats by expanding the reach of the law. The new hate speech laws are largely to be tested. But the problem of hate and polarisation is not one that can be addressed solely through criminalising repugnant speech or behaviour. As the ASIO Director General has said: "You cannot arrest your way to social cohesion."⁷

While laws can offer a degree of protection, they need to be complemented by sound social policy and community-driven efforts that can be sustained over the long term. Hate and polarisation are societal issues and require a whole-of-society response.

As Multicultural NSW has said for many years, if the common aim of extremists is to divide us as a society – to incite schisms within and between communities, often along racial or religious lines, and increasingly along lines of gender and sexuality as well – then the response must be a whole-of-society one: "We – all of us together – will not let extremists divide us."⁸

We "require whole of government, whole of community, whole of society responses," Burgess has said.⁹ This is not, however, to place social cohesion at the service at national security. It is, in fact, the other way around: national security is only one contributor to social cohesion. We all have a role to play to protect our democratic freedoms and rights, including our right to practise our culture, speak our language, and profess our faith. We all have a role to play to ensure that threats to social cohesion are met with a resounding and united response.

Experiences of racism compound fears of crime

In May, a series of violent assaults committed against people from Chinese and other Asian backgrounds across Sydney's inner east led to widespread community concern that people were being racially targeted.

The NSW Police Force acted quickly to charge seven young people in connection with assaults but found no evidence to suggest they were racially motivated. Yet the perception that these incidents were racist hate crimes was clearly giving rise to heightened fears for safety in the Chinese Australian community. As detailed in the report from the COMPLAN Committee (see page 45), this required a concerted response from police, government agencies and leaders to reassure the community that Sydney is a safe and welcoming place to live and to visit.

It is important to understand why the Chinese Australian community was feeling especially vulnerable. Chinese Australian and other Asian Australian communities do experience racism, and the reality is that experiences of racism make people feel less safe.

We know that Chinese and other Asian Australian communities suffered increased incidents of racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, when racist conspiracy theories and scapegoating were circulating online. At that time, a 2021 Lowy Institute report found that 18% of Chinese Australians had experienced racism. The survey found that almost one in five Chinese Australians had been physically threatened or attacked in the previous year, and around one in three Chinese Australian community members also say they have faced verbal abuse or discrimination.¹⁰

We also know that whenever national security pundits talk about 'the China threat' in the media, this can have an impact in the Chinese Australian community in terms of their sense of belonging and social cohesion.¹¹

Fear of crime can sometimes have as much an impact on community wellbeing as actual rates of crime. To help reduce the fear of crime, we need to understand how experiences of racism and discrimination, and public discourse, can negatively affect a community's sense of safety.

We also need to promote the positive contributions that our cultural communities make to the State. The same Lowy Institute report from 2021 found almost

⁷ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/2025-lowy-lecture-delivered-director-general-security-mike-burgess-am>

⁸ Multicultural NSW COMPACT Program and Grants Information 2024-2028

⁹ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/2025-lowy-lecture-delivered-director-general-security-mike-burgess-am>

¹⁰ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/taking-measure-prejudice-pandemic>

¹¹ <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/2024/11/aukus-china-threat-and-chinese-australian-communities>

70 per cent of Chinese Australians still say they feel accepted by Australian society, with almost eight in 10 saying Australia is a good place to live.

The 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion Report found that more people hold positive views of Chinese Australians than those who held negative views (see page 30).

These statistics show that most Australians value the contribution that our Chinese Australian community makes to Australian society.

Overseas conflicts leave their mark

2025 was one of the worst years in recent history in terms of global conflict. In its 2025 Global Peace Index report, the Sydney-based global think-tank the Institute for Economics and Peace records 59 currently active state-based conflicts, the most since World War II, with 78 countries engaged in conflicts beyond their borders.¹³

There were 152,000 conflict-related deaths in the preceding year. Conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine accounting for 63% of conflict-related deaths worldwide and are the primary drivers of the global fall in peacefulness. About 122 million people were forcibly displaced by conflict around the world.¹⁴

The 2025 Global Peace Index listed Russia as the least peaceful country in the world, followed by Ukraine, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Israel, and Mali.¹⁵

As a multicultural society, we are connected to every part of the world. This connection makes us stronger as a society, economically, socially and culturally. It also means that whenever conflict or strife occur somewhere in the world, there will always be communities in NSW who are affected.

It is not enough to say that overseas issues should stay overseas when people in our community have lost family members, loved ones or the ability to travel to their ancestral homelands as a consequence of global conflict. Nobody wants conflicts from overseas imported to Australia, and people who have fled overseas conflicts to find peace and security in Australia are the first to agree with this point. But recognising how overseas conflicts can directly impact our communities requires a more empathetic approach, one which extends a sense of care and compassion to people who are hurting and grieving.

Some overseas conflicts attract significant media attention and are the cause for local activism. Given the scale of the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, these have understandably continued to dominate public

attention. The year saw the continuation of weekly protests against the war in Gaza, two years on from the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel, culminating in the 90,000-strong 'March for Humanity' protest over the Sydney Harbour Bridge in August. Russia's war on Ukraine continues to see local communities take to the streets in protest.

Other overseas conflicts are less well known to the general public, yet the communities who are impacted can suffer in the same way. The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Sudan and ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo have not received the same level of awareness as others, but for the Sudanese and Congolese communities in NSW, these are highly significant and traumatising world events. Similarly, the Gen Z youth uprisings in South Asia and elsewhere have profound implications for communities and young people connected to those parts of the world.

For those who have fled overseas conflicts, the peace and security of life in Australia can sometimes provide opportunities for peacebuilding, activism and dissent that might not have been possible in the home country. However, as ASIO has assessed, some community members have been exposed to threats, intimidation and harassment in Australia by malign foreign actors who seek to silence dissent towards their authoritarian regimes. Foreign interference in communities undermines social cohesion and community harmony, damages our way of life, and threatens freedom and democracy.¹⁶

Everyday connections make us stronger

In an increasingly uncertain world, it is helpful to remind ourselves of the day-to-day relationships that sustain us as a cohesive multicultural society. Despite the real challenges we faced in 2025, and that are acknowledged in this report, there is strong evidence that the people of NSW see and experience cultural, linguistic and religious diversity as a normal part of everyday life.

Despite the existence of divisive forces seeking to sow discord and disharmony, and contrary to a lot of the public commentary about the so-called demise of 'social cohesion', the evidence is clear from sources such as the 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion (see page 26) and the NSW Community Relations Survey (see page 31), commissioned for this report, that at the everyday level of human relationships, generally we get on well with each other across cultural differences.

We are well advised to draw from this source of strength when facing any future challenges to community harmony.

¹³ <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Global-Peace-Index-2025-web.pdf>

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ <https://www.afp.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-04/English-FIC-factsheet.pdf>

CASE STUDY

Youth-led solutions for African communities in the Illawarra

In early 2025, fighting between security forces and militant groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) escalated rapidly. Since 1996, conflict in the eastern DRC has led to around six million deaths. Today, one million Congolese are seeking refuge abroad and 21 million people in the country need urgent humanitarian aid, making it one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.¹²

The Empowering African Youth project, led by the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI) and supported under the Multicultural NSW COMPACT Program, aims to support African youth currently living in the Illawarra region. Commencing in mid-2025, the project responds to concerns of local leaders and young people about the impacts that current conflicts in Africa, including the conflict in the DRC, are having within local communities.

The project builds on findings of a co-designed consultation with the region's African communities which took place in 2024 in Cringila, Wollongong. Led by MCCI in partnership with the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), the consultation included over 110 community members. Around 40 young people participated in the youth-specific consultation activity on the day.

The consultation highlighted some of the pressures affecting African Australian young people in the Illawarra, as well as examples of resilience and creativity. The opportunity for dialogue and co-design will help ensure the project reflects lived experience and community voices.

"Overseas conflict deeply impacts my sense of belonging and wellbeing," said one of the youth participants.

"As a Banyamulenge from the DRC, I worry for family and community, feeling helpless being far away. These tensions have strained relationships in Australia, even ending a close friendship, and make it harder to trust or form new connections. While I value life here, my identity remains tied to my homeland, leaving me torn between two worlds."

Another youth participant offered ideas for intergenerational solutions.

"To help young people thrive in harmony, we must support both youth and their families. Parents' trauma often shapes attitudes, so programs should include culturally aware parenting workshops and safe spaces for healing. Youth-led spaces, education, and culturally safe mental health support can reduce stereotypes and prevent overseas conflicts from influencing local communities."



MCCI hosts weekly youth activities and workshops to help young people build resilience in a culturally safe and trauma-informed way. That includes using art and music, cultural dance, football, interactive skill development and information sessions to engage young people. Excursions and whole-of-family events broaden the project's impact in the community.

The 12-month project aims to build trust, confidence and leadership capacity among African Australian youth, and build community resilience to the impacts of overseas conflicts.

¹² <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>

The people of NSW in 2025

To understand the state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity, we need to appreciate that NSW is one of the most culturally diverse states in the world. Cultural diversity is complex and can be measured in different ways.

As we know from the 2021 ABS Census, which is still the most current data available (until the results of the 2026 Census are published in 2027), 29.3% of people in this state were born overseas, and 50.3% (the majority) of us have at least one parent who was born overseas.

Country of birth is only one indicator of cultural diversity. In last year's (2024) edition of the

Community Relations Report, we analysed Census data relating to country of birth. In the 2023 edition, we examined data relating to linguistic diversity, and in 2022 we examined religious diversity.¹⁷

For this year's edition, we take a look at another indicator of cultural diversity, the 2021 Census data on ancestry.

Cultural diversity is in our DNA: what ancestry data can tell us about our multicultural identity

The rising popularity of ancestry DNA tests and TV series like SBS's *Who Do You Think You Are?* suggests that more people are becoming interested in discovering their ancestral roots.

Sometimes the search for roots can dig up unexpected results.¹⁸ The results of SBS's Janice Petersen's DNA test, for example, found that her genes came from "every single inhabitable continent. All corners of our wonderful planet are now highlighted or encircled on my DNA map."¹⁹

Our DNA can tell us some interesting stories about our ancestry. But for the most part, ancestry, or cultural heritage, is something people self-identify with, making it a more subjective and fluid measure

of cultural diversity than more static measures like country of birth.

The ABS defines ancestry as the "ethnic origin or cultural heritage to which a person identifies and/or to which a person's forebears are/were attached".²⁰

How an individual identifies with an ancestry can change over time. Individuals can discover roots they did not previously know about, or they can reclaim a cultural identity that was previously kept hidden. Ancestry can also become more complex with each generation.

The 2021 Census recorded over 300 ancestries. The most frequently reported ancestries in NSW are English, Australian, Irish, Scottish, and Chinese.

NSW - Top five ancestries by size

Ranking (2021 Census)	Ancestry	2021 Census – number of responses	% of NSW population (2021 Census)
1	English	2,404,990	29.8%
2	Australian	2,307,549	28.6%
3	Irish	735,340	9.1%
4	Scottish	620,363	7.7%
5	Chinese	581,641	7.2%

¹⁷ <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/resources/the-state-of-community-relations-in-nsw/>

¹⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-05/what-to-consider-before-taking-an-online-ancestry-dna-test/104924060>

¹⁹ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/comment-my-dna-betrayed-me-and-i-like-it/1ulqpl6vm>

²⁰ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/information-papers/understanding-and-using-ancestry-data>; <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/ancestry-standard/latest-release>

An arguably more interesting picture emerges when we look at the statistics on the fastest growing ancestries. The fastest growing ancestry responses by size between 2016 and 2021 showed Australian Aboriginal leading, followed by English, Chinese, Indian, and Australian. For the reasons outlined above, these figures cannot be understood solely in terms of recent migration patterns, but can also be related to how people are self-identifying with their ancestry.

NSW - Fastest growing ancestries by size

Ranking (2016 Census) – Ancestry (by size)	Ranking (2021 Census) – Ancestry (by size)	Ranking (2016 and 2021 Census) – Growth in ancestry (by size)	Ancestry	Growth (between 2016 and 2021)	% Growth (between 2016 and 2021)
27	8	1	Australian Aboriginal	▲ 228,744	▲ 741.5%
1	1	2	English	▲ 102,510	▲ 4.5%
5	5	3	Chinese	▲ 67,046	▲ 13.0%
8	7	4	Indian	▲ 49,172	▲ 23.2%
2	2	5	Australian	▲ 46,484	▲ 2.1%

An individual can have more than one ancestry. Currently, the Census allows individuals to provide up to two responses when answering the question. In 2021, 36% of NSW residents reported having at least two ancestries, but the fact that the Census only allows two responses may be misrepresenting the complexity of the situation. Recognising this, for the 2026 Census, the ABS will redesign the question to allow up to four responses, which may tell an even more interesting story about our multicultural identity.²¹

Ancestry is clearly not a simple measure of cultural diversity. The complex ways in which individuals can self-identify with their culture(s) or heritage(s) can be influenced by a range of factors, including the preservation or maintenance of cultural traditions, the degree to which people can feel ‘in-between’ two or more cultural identities, the process by which people gradually come to identify more as Australian, exposure to different cultures and people, or the process of discovering long lost roots.

Cultural identity can be known, discovered, reclaimed, blended or otherwise. This fluidity allows us to “curate meaningful identities through bridging distinct cultures by finding commonalities, learning about others and the self, and thus blending fragmented identities into a coherent sense of ‘who I am.’”

This is also a reminder for governments and service providers that we should not simplify notions of culture or identity for bureaucratic or other reasons. As a multicultural society, we are not simply made up of many different cultural communities. Communities are not homogenous and individuals can identify with multiple ancestries or cultural identities.

We are a culturally diverse society, and we are a culturally diverse people – often even at the level of the same person. This is also why it remains so important to find our commonalities as fellow Australians and appreciate our differences and idiosyncrasies as important aspects of who we are.

²¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/census-media-hub/releases-and-statements/on-the-record/clarification-reports-published-regarding-ancestry-and-ethnicity-questions-and-2026-census>

²² Virgona and Kashima (2024) ‘Polycultural Identity Experiences: A Qualitative Exploration in Australia’, Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Volume 55, Issue 6.

²⁶ [https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/understanding-change-counts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians-census/latest-release#:~:text=Strait%20Islander%20persons',Overview%20of%20the%20change,2011%20and%202016%20\(18.4%25\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/understanding-change-counts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians-census/latest-release#:~:text=Strait%20Islander%20persons',Overview%20of%20the%20change,2011%20and%202016%20(18.4%25))

Migration and population trends

NSW is built on immigration and our economic productivity and prosperity will continue to depend on immigration. Despite some misunderstandings about the topic, as demonstrated at vocal rallies against so-called ‘mass migration’ during the year (see page 46), most Australians understand the social and economic benefits of immigration.²⁷

It is understandable that current cost of living pressures and problems of housing affordability have led many people to question if current migration levels are too high. There is a place for legitimate debate about migration policy and population planning. But there is no place for the kind of racist scapegoating disguised as debate that we have seen during the year (see page 46).

It is also important to understand how population growth, which can only be sustained by migration, is critical to economic growth,²⁸ and that a decline in population growth can have negative impacts on our economy. Population decline means “fewer workers, savers and spenders.”²⁹ We saw this during the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2023, when international border closures effectively stopped migration and saw a sudden drop in population growth. From an economic standpoint, we experienced a spike in job vacancies,³⁰ businesses reporting labour shortages and Australia experiencing the second worst labour shortage in the OECD in 2022.³¹

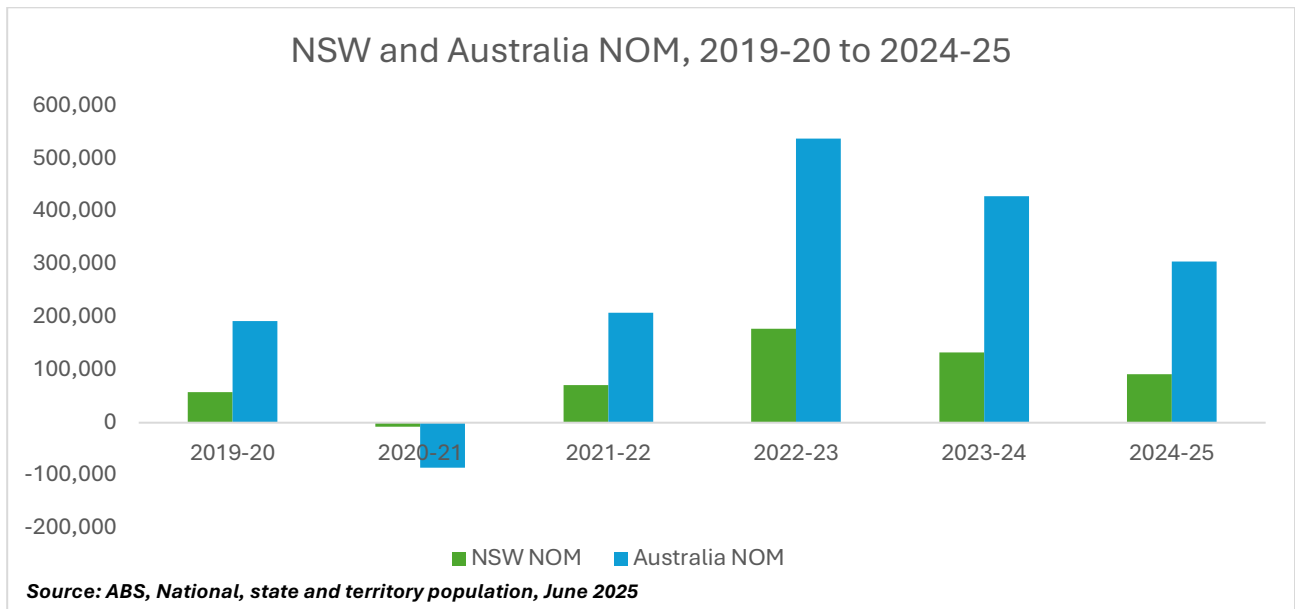
It is equally important that we understand the actual data on migration and population growth, because a closer look at the numbers reveals that ‘mass migration’ is a myth.³²

Our State’s population growth is a result of natural increase (births minus deaths), net interstate migration (‘NIM’) (interstate arrivals minus interstate departures) and net overseas migration (‘NOM’) (overseas arrivals minus overseas departures).³³ With declining fertility rates (people are having fewer babies), an ageing population, and persistent interstate departures, NOM remains the primary driver of our population growth.³⁴

While our population stagnated during the pandemic, we did see a peak in NOM-driven population growth when Australia’s borders reopened in 2021-22. Yet this peaked in 2022-23 (2.1%) and has been steadily declining since.³⁵

In 2024-25, the population of NSW grew in total by 101,821 people (1.2%). NOM was 91,573. This is a 31% drop (-41,542) from the previous financial year.³⁶

This downward trend is due to a combination of factors. Remembering that NOM is measured by arrivals minus departures, and that it counts temporary migrants as well as permanent arrivals, the short explanation is that there has been both an increase in departures and a fall in new arrivals.



²⁷ https://scanloninstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/SI0001_MappingSocialCohesion_2025_v6.pdf

²⁸ https://population.gov.au/sites/population.gov.au/files/2021-12/low_overseas_migration_quick_guide.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.imf.org/en/publications/fandd/issues/2025/06/the-debate-over-falling-fertility-david-bloom>

³⁰ https://www.bca.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Migration_makes_Australia_stronger_-_AH.pdf

³¹ The post-COVID-19 rise in labour shortages, OECD, 7 July 2022

³² <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/sep/01/anti-immigration-protesters-say-australias-migration-is-at-record-highs-but-the-figures-tell-a-different-story>

³³ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/research/tools/migrationdashboard/>

³⁴ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-australias-population>

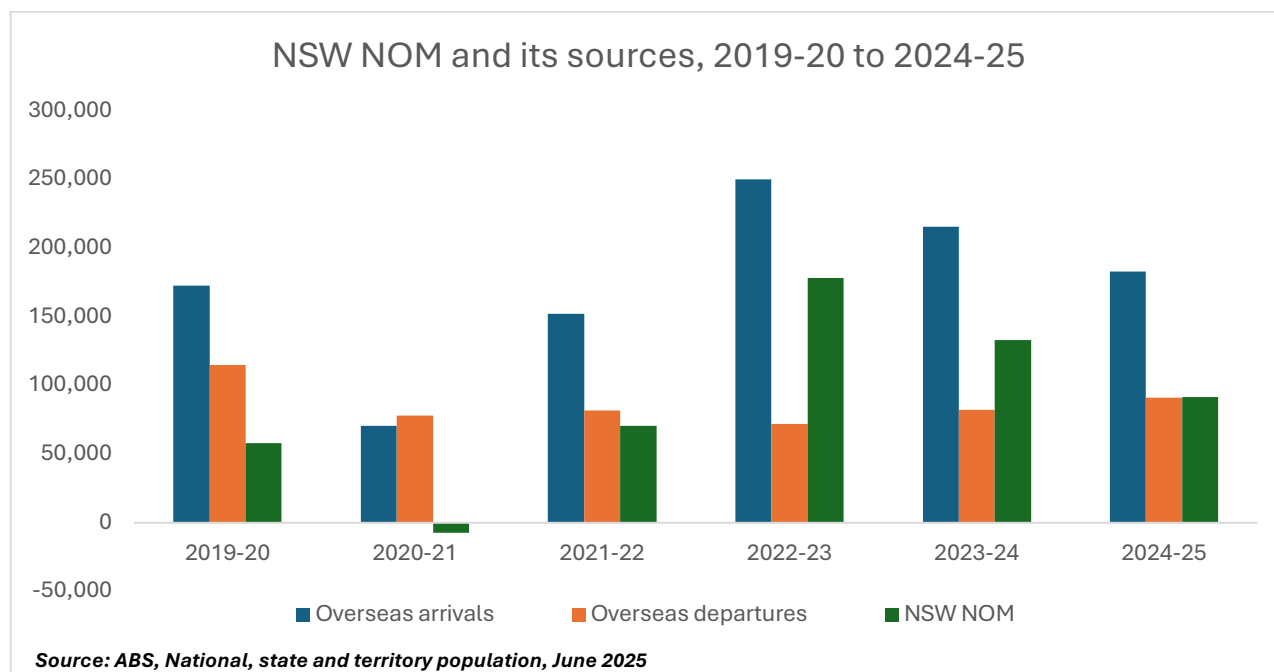
³⁵ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025/31010do001_202506.xlsx

³⁶ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025/31010do001_202506.xlsx

Overseas departures in 2024-25 are up 11% (8,897) from the previous financial year.³⁷ This is partly a delayed consequence of the COVID years, when temporary visa holders who were unable to leave the country received visa extensions, which are now expiring around the same time as the temporary visas that were granted when borders reopened and we received an influx of temporary new arrivals.³⁸ Accordingly, we saw temporary visa departures increase by 97% when comparing 2022-23 to 2024-25 levels.³⁹ This trend may only continue when we consider most migrants in Australia are temporary visa holders, and most do not transition to become permanent residents.⁴⁰

Overseas arrivals are down 15% (-41,542) from the previous financial year.⁴¹ This trend is largely due to temporary visa holder arrival numbers falling by 22% (-33,840), especially international students (down 20%)⁴² in response to policy changes by the Australian Government, such as the introduction of international student ‘targets’. Although international student numbers may rise in the future with the Australian Government’s announced increases to the 2026 ‘target’, a combination of factors suggests Australia will not meet such targets.⁴³ Furthermore, temporary visitor arrivals (longer-term tourists), a significant contributor to NOM, has also fallen by 38% (-12,240).⁴⁴

Migration levels were already self-correcting after the COVID blip. After a total halt to migration during the pandemic, there was an obvious spike once the borders re-opened, but that spike was already becoming normalised from 2022-23 onwards. Additional policy interventions to curb migration rates risk over-correcting the



trajectory and may have “prolonged the volatility” from an economic perspective.⁴⁵ As we saw during COVID, a new drop in immigration may recreate the conditions that produced a significant shortage of skills and labour.⁴⁶ Already in 2024-25, the number of temporary skilled visas granted for NSW applicants has risen by 31% (6,064) to address critical skills shortages.⁴⁷

In 2024-25, NSW recorded a net interstate migration (NIM) loss of 24,328 and we should not expect to see gains anytime soon.⁴⁹

³⁷ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025/31010do001_202506.xls

³⁸ <https://policybrief.anu.edu.au/why-is-net-overseas-migration-plummeting/>; <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/overseas-migration/latest-release>

³⁹ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/overseas-migration/2024-25/34070DO004_202425.xlsx

⁴⁰ <https://theconversation.com/yes-migration-to-australia-is-up-but-new-figures-show-most-migrants-do-not-become-citizens-267731>

⁴¹ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025/31010do001_202506.xls

⁴² https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/overseas-migration/2024-25/34070DO004_202425.xlsx

⁴³ <https://theconversation.com/australias-student-caps-will-ease-up-in-2026-but-times-will-still-be-tough-for-international-education-262521>

⁴⁴ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/overseas-migration/2024-25/34070DO004_202425.xlsx

⁴⁵ <https://policybrief.anu.edu.au/why-is-net-overseas-migration-plummeting/>

⁴⁶ <https://policybrief.anu.edu.au/why-is-net-overseas-migration-plummeting/>

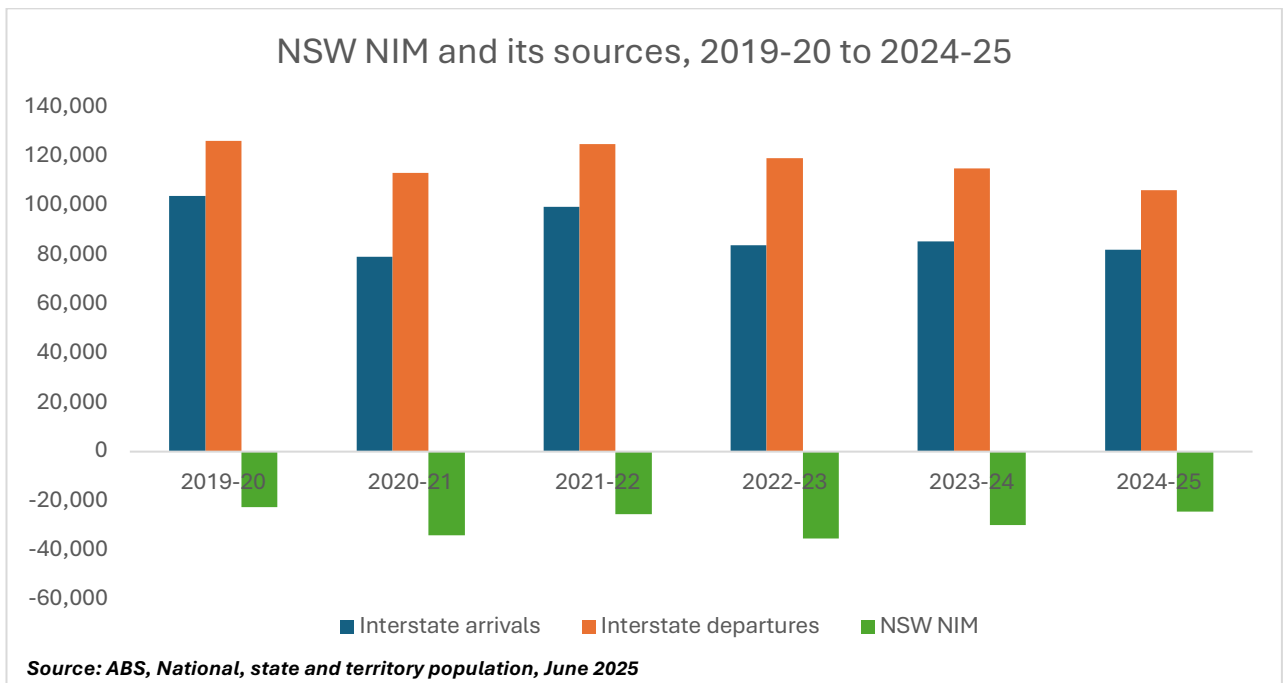
⁴⁷ <https://www.data.gov.au/data/dataset/visa-temporary-work-skilled/resource/13e0c12d-f17a-40f6-ba9f-fedcdfaf5b8c>

State of origin: NSW loses in the interstate migration stakes

Tragically, NSW lost the 2025 rugby league State of Origin against Queensland after winning it back in 2024. But from an interstate migration perspective, NSW has been losing people to Queensland and other states since 1979.⁴⁸

NIM losses for NSW peaked during and after the COVID-19 pandemic as many residents moved to other states.⁵⁰ People leave NSW for other states for a variety of reasons, but some of the recent factors include housing affordability, working from home flexibility or the simple desire for a sea or tree change.⁵¹

Similar factors can also influence internal migration, which is the movement of people within the state to different regional areas. In 2023-24, Sydney experienced the largest combined net interstate and net internal migration



loss of all Australian capital cities with 41,086, which is more than double the total number of losses suffered by all other capital cities.⁵² Only Brisbane and Perth recorded population gains from interstate and internal migration in 2023-24.⁵³

⁴⁸ <https://www.id.com.au/insights/articles/migration-eases-but-growth-remains-strong-australias-population-march-2025/>

⁴⁹ https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025/31010do001_202506.xls

⁵⁰ <https://www.id.com.au/insights/articles/australias-population-hits-27-million-migration-slows-slightly/>

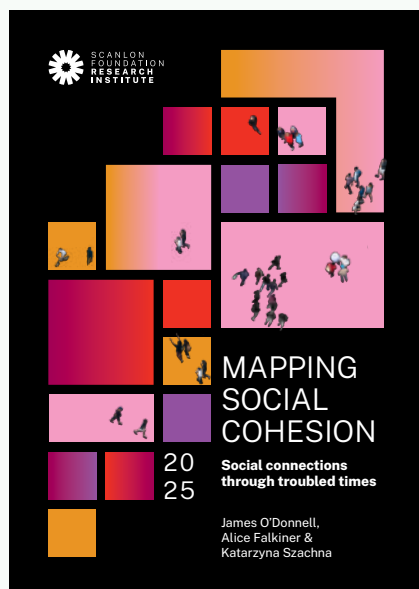
⁵¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-02/abs-data-confirms-city-exodus-during-covid/13112868>

⁵² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release>

⁵³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release#capital-cities>

Measuring the state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity

Social cohesion faces challenges but remains resilient: key points from the 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion Report.



“The stability of social cohesion may seem surprising in the face of these tumultuous times but perhaps reflects the continuity of daily life and the resilience of social bonds and connections that shape our everyday lives... Australians continue to be actively involved in the social and civic life of their communities, including through participating in sports clubs, charities, social clubs and religious groups, connecting with family and friends on a regular basis and building and maintaining bonds with neighbours and local communities.”⁵⁴

2025 Mapping Social Cohesion Report: Social connections through troubled times

This section contributes to an assessment of the state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity, as required under the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*.

For several years we have drawn on publicly available data from the annual Mapping Social Cohesion Report by the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. This is a major national annual survey of public opinion on social cohesion, immigration and population. The survey’s annual findings have provided a valuable frame of reference for the Community Relations Report and for the work of Multicultural NSW by identifying national trends that may impact community relations.

The Australian National University (ANU) conducted the 19th Mapping Social Cohesion survey for the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute in 2025.⁵⁵

The survey gets bigger every year and the 2025 poll was the biggest yet, with over 8,000 respondents providing an extensive insight into Australians’ attitudes, perceptions and behaviours across 100 indicators of social cohesion, immigration, multiculturalism, wellbeing and other topical issues.

The report includes the findings of additional surveys of 245 people who have immigrated to Australia. These surveys were conducted in four languages (including English).

The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion aggregates survey responses across five domains of social cohesion: belonging, worth, social inclusion and justice, participation and acceptance and rejection.

⁵⁴ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>, p. 5

⁵⁵ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>

The 2025 survey revealed that social cohesion in Australia has remained steady for the third consecutive year, returning the same score as 2023 and 2024: 78 on the SMI.⁵⁶

Amid global instability and domestic financial difficulties, this stability indicates resilience, which the report attributes to a strong social fabric, connections and wellbeing, neighbourhood cohesion, consistent levels of happiness and continued recognition of the contribution and importance of our diversity.

Despite persistent pressures on social cohesion, Australians actively participate in the social and civic life of their communities, including through sports clubs, charities, social clubs and religious groups. “These perhaps provide important foundations for Australia’s overall social cohesion that are not easily disturbed by external social, economic and political upheaval,” the report notes.⁵⁷

While stable for three years, however, we have still not recovered to the level of 2021, when social cohesion peaked at 92 on the SMI after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, only to drop to current levels in the post-pandemic era of persistent economic volatility and global uncertainty.

Economic pressures and financial stress continue to be the primary factors impacting social cohesion, with key impacts including a lower sense of belonging, lower trust in government, and greater social isolation, particularly among younger Australians.

While trust in the federal government increased slightly overall (from 33% in 2024 to 37% in 2025), people experiencing financial hardship remain significantly less trusting of the government than those who are financially secure and comfortable.

The report shows our sense of national belonging remains historically low, especially among younger Australians. This demographic is significantly affected by housing stress, insecure work, and cost-of-living pressures, all while experiencing increased levels of social isolation. Our sense of national belonging has weakened structurally and disproportionately across generations and among different social groups, suggesting that intergenerational inequality poses not only an economic challenge but also a growing risk to social cohesion.

The overall state of social cohesion in 2025 is largely shaped by material conditions. Importantly, it is not reflective of a declining state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity. Indeed, on a positive note, the Scanlon report shows that support for cultural diversity – such as support for multiculturalism

and a non-discriminatory immigration program – remains robust, and most Australians believe that people from different backgrounds coexist harmoniously within local communities.

This is an important corrective to some of the negative public commentary about ‘social cohesion’ that would have us believe there has been some kind of fundamental rupture of community relations along cultural or religious lines. The Scanlon report debunks this myth and provides clear evidence that cultural diversity in Australia is highly valued and remains one of our key strengths as a society.

The consistently high level of support for multiculturalism recorded by the Scanlon surveys does not mean people are not concerned about immigration levels. It is possible to embrace cultural diversity while still being concerned about the economic impact of the extent and pace of demographic change. The Scanlon report shows that more people are becoming concerned that immigration levels are “too high”. However, even those who feel that way still concur that “multiculturalism has been good for Australia” (71%), that migrants born outside of Australia can become good citizens (85%), and that immigration in general is good for Australia’s economy.⁵⁸

This is not to underestimate the reality of problems like racism, discrimination and religious intolerance. The 2025 Scanlon report reveals that experiences of racism and discrimination persist as a significant challenge. It also shows that racism is not experienced uniformly, with particular ethnic and religious groups facing it more than others, especially those from visible minorities and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The report provides insights into widely publicised concerns about rising antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate linked to the ongoing war in Gaza. It records an increase in the percentage of people holding negative attitudes towards Jewish people (from 9% in 2023 to 13% in 2024 and to 15% in 2025) and Muslims (from 27% in 2023 to 34% in 2024 and to 35% in 2025). Attitudes to these groups were significantly less positive and more negative after the start of the current conflict in Gaza.⁵⁹ The report stresses that these are not a reflection of the attitudes of most Australians but rather represent a persistent, entrenched, and concentrated form of discrimination that can have significant long-term impacts on people’s sense of belonging, safety and trust. It points to the complex impacts of external geopolitical events, trends and narratives that cannot be understood

⁵⁶ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>

⁵⁷ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>, p. 5

⁵⁸ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>, p.12.

⁵⁹ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>, p.14.

One of the most significant findings has been the resilience of the Australian population given the multiple national and international events that have resonated through our various media channels. This resilience is, in part, the result of our connectedness and the resulting social bonds that are particularly characteristics of our local neighbourhoods.⁶⁰

Anthea Hancocks, CEO, Scanlon Foundation Research Institute



solely in terms of domestic attitudes and sentiments towards community groups. These increases also coincide with growing religious intolerance generally, with more people holding negative attitudes to any faith group other than their own.

Negative attitudes towards Muslims remain by far the highest towards any single faith group. This is a long-term trend recorded by the Scanlon surveys and so cannot be understood only within the context of current geopolitical issues, although the recent rise in negative attitudes towards Muslims reverses what had been a gradual downward trend before 2024. These attitudes are well-documented realities that must be a serious concern when addressing the problem of religious intolerance and challenges to social cohesion. Beyond the very real risk to community safety, particularly to Muslim women who are traditionally more visible, there are also deeper long-term risks in terms of community wellbeing, civic participation and belonging.

One of the key findings of the report points to the role of community cohesion at the local neighbourhood level. Local social bonds are identified as an important protective factor, a buffer against the winds of an increasingly turbulent world. In the words of Anthea Hancocks, the CEO of the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, in her foreword to the report.

Opposite are some key findings from the 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion Report. Readers are encouraged to visit the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute website and read the report to discover its many valuable findings.⁶¹



⁶⁰ <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>

Some key findings from the 2024 Mapping Social Cohesion report by the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute

Social cohesion is facing challenges yet remains stable

- The Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) measures attitudes within the five domains of belonging, worth, social justice, political participation, and acceptance/rejection.
- The SMI for 2025 was 78, the same as 2023 and 2024, a notable level of stability and resilience, but still the equal lowest recorded SMI since the Scanlon surveys began in 2007.
- 46% of Australians report a “great sense of belonging”, down from 48% in 2023, 52% in 2022, 63% in 2020, and 74% in 2007.
- Gen Z records the lowest level of a sense of belonging, at around 31%, closely linked to economic stress and social isolation.
- 58% of financially comfortable Australians report a great sense of belonging.
- The proportion of adults who take great pride in the Australian way of life and culture has been stable in 2024 and 2025 (34%) but fallen by 14% since 2020.
- The proportion of adults who strongly agree that maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is essential declined from 49% in 2019 to 42% in 2025.

Financial pressures are the key stressors for social cohesion

- Around 40% of Australians describe themselves as “just getting along” (28%), “struggling” (9%), or “poor” (3%).
- These figures are nearly identical to those in 2023 and 2024, indicating financial stress remains strong, despite slowing inflation and a pause in interest rate rises.
- Financial hardship is widespread among young and middle-aged adults, single-parent families, non-family households, and renters.
- Among the age group (25-34), 16% struggled to pay bills/poor, 20% went without meals (often/sometimes), and 29% went without medicines/health (often/sometimes).

Attitudes to immigration levels are driven by economic concerns rather than anti-immigrant sentiment

- Just over half of survey respondents (51%) said immigration levels are “too high”, up from 49% in 2024, 33% in 2023 and 24% in 2022. The 2025 results are the highest ever recorded by the Scanlon surveys.
- 46% of Australians surveyed who were themselves born overseas believe immigration is too high.
- Overall, 80% of respondents still agree or strongly agree that “immigrants are generally good for the economy”, two points below 2024 levels but still four points higher than in 2019.
- Of those who think immigration is currently too high:
 - 58% cited economic issues or housing affordability as the most important problem facing Australia (which is the same proportion as the general population), while only 9% cited immigration itself as the most important problem.
 - 71% still believe multiculturalism has been good for Australia
 - 66% still believe that ‘immigrants are generally good for the economy’ (compared to 80% of the general population).

Support for multiculturalism and cultural diversity remains high

- 83% per cent of people believe that “multiculturalism has been good for Australia”, down from 85% in 2024, but still higher than 2018 levels (78%).
- 90% agree or strongly agree that “someone who was born outside of Australia is just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born in Australia”.
- 67% of people agree or strongly agree that “accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger”, down from 71% in 2024 and 78% in 2023, but still higher than 63% in 2018.
- Younger cohorts (Gen Z and Millennials) consistently express higher support for multiculturalism and cultural diversity than older Australians.

Racism and religious intolerance are persistent problems

- 16% of people surveyed claimed that they had been subject to discrimination due to their skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion over the last 12 months. This is similar to levels recorded since 2018, suggesting the problem is a persistent one.
- This figure rises to 40% for people born in Asia or Africa.
- Attitudes to immigrants from China and India are mixed, with positive and negative views nearly equal. 26% of adults reported a negative attitude towards immigrants from China, while 32% held positive views. 30% held negative views of immigrants from India, while 31% held positive views.
- There is widespread awareness that racism is a problem, with 67% of people believing that racism is a fairly big or very big problem in Australia. This figure is marginally lower for people born in Asia or Africa (65%) and marginally higher (69%) for people who were born in Australia. This possibly reflects a growing sense of responsibility among non-migrant Australians for addressing racism.
- The proportion of people holding negative sentiment towards Muslims remains significant in contemporary Australia at 35%, which is marginally higher than 2024 (34%) and a reversal of a trend that had seen negative attitudes slowly declining from 2019 (39%) to 2023 (27%).

Local community cohesion is a key strength

- 80% of Australians report that people from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds get along well in their neighbourhoods.
- 82% of survey respondents agreed that people in their local area are willing to help their neighbours.
- People who feel they live in cohesive neighbourhoods are 65% more likely to say they feel a strong sense of belonging to Australia.

- >
- The faith group with the next highest level of negative sentiment is Christians, which decreased slightly from 19% in 2024 to 18% in 2025, followed by Sikhs with 16% of people holding negative attitudes in 2025.
 - 15% of respondents held negative views towards Jews, up from 13% in 2024, while 14% held negative attitudes towards Hindus, up from 13% in 2024.
 - Buddhists are the most favoured of the religious groups, with 46% of respondents holding positive views and only 4% holding negative views.



Measuring active community relations: summary findings from the 2025 NSW Community Relations Survey

This section presents summary findings of the 2025 NSW Community Relations Survey. This is the third iteration of an annual survey commissioned by Multicultural NSW to inform the Community Relations Report.

Since 2022, Multicultural NSW has been working in partnership with experts from the Australian National University's Australian Social Cohesion – Exploring New Directions (ASCEND) interdisciplinary research team to find a way to better understand the state of community relations as affected by cultural diversity.

The NSW Community Relations Survey (CRS) is unique in providing both quantitative and qualitative measures of 'active community relations'. While other surveys, such as the Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion survey discussed in the preceding section, provide valuable insights into respondents' attitudes and opinions about people from different cultural backgrounds, the CRS introduces novel measures that ask if, and how, respondents actively engage with people from cultural backgrounds different to their own.

At a high level, the 2025 CRS continues to demonstrate evidence of positive relations between communities from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, as did the 2023 and 2024 surveys.

In measuring 'active community relations', approximately 40% of all respondents from the state-representative sample indicated that they actively engage in pro-social interactions with community members from different cultural backgrounds. Compared to 2024, these respondents also listed considerably more activities by which they actively engage with people from different backgrounds and gave more elaborate descriptions of these activities.

These findings provide valuable insights into the practical ways in which people are proactively fostering positive inter-cultural community relations and how we might learn from this to guide future investment in community harmony.

There are some changes observed in the results of the 2025 survey compared to previous years. They suggest that Australian-born respondents from regional areas are less likely to actively engage with people from different cultural backgrounds than those in metropolitan areas. One could hypothesise that this may be due to a lack of exposure to

cultural diversity in some regional areas, but the 2025 findings also show a decline in this measure in regional areas compared to the 2024 results. The 2025 survey also found levels of trust within local communities were lower in regional areas. The findings may suggest a need for more dedicated measures to foster active, positive community relations and inter-cultural contact in regional areas.

Measuring active community relations: how the NSW Community Relations Survey works

Before presenting the findings of the 2025 CRS, it is useful to describe briefly what the CRS measures and the unique analytical strategy employed by the research team.

The focus of the CRS has been to examine the state of community relations between people of different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds at the community level, with a state-representative sample in terms of cultural diversity and metropolitan and regional coverage.

The concept of 'community relations' is multi-faceted and encompasses intergroup contact, community solidarity, social cohesion, trust, experiences of discrimination, community participation, and social isolation. Various larger-scale national surveys such as the Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion Survey and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) General Social Survey also measure these constructs. The CRS complements these existing surveys by using different and additional measures drawn from both international surveys and contemporary research in social psychology.

During the development of the CRS, it became evident that no existing surveys capture the extent to which community members actively seek to engage with fellow community members from ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds different to their own. To this end, several novel 'active community relations' measures were created, including one qualitative measure. These are outlined in the table on page 32.

2025 CRS constructs and example measures

Domain	Example Item
Active Community Relations (General)	'I invite people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious groups to my house.'
Active Community Relations (Culture)	'I try to understand the customs and practices of people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds.'
Active Community Relations (Bystander Intervention)	'If I see discrimination against people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds I actively work to confront it.'
Active Community Relations Norms (General)	'Other people in my community invite people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious groups to their house.'
Active Community Relations Norms (Culture)	'Other people in my community try to understand the customs and practices of people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds.'
Active Community Relations Norms (Bystander Intervention)	'If other people in my community see discrimination against people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds they actively work to confront it.'
Active Community Relations (Type of Activity - Qualitative)	Emergent themes: • socialising • cross-cultural sharing • attending organised events (e.g. multicultural festivals, volunteering) • helping behaviour
Community solidarity	'People in my community can depend on one another.'
Trust	'People in my local area can be trusted.'
Discrimination	'I experience discrimination ...in the workplace ...in my local area ... at restaurants ...when dealing with government or public services.'
National identification	'I have a lot in common with other Australians.'

2025 CRS: sampling procedure and analytical strategy

The CRS is a fully representative survey in that the demographic characteristics of respondents aligns with the proportion of NSW residents in terms of age, gender, and country of birth from both metropolitan and regional areas. A total of 2038 NSW residents over the age of 18 participated in the survey (963 male, 1069 female, three non-binary/third gender, three prefer not to say).

Given the focus of the CRS, relative to existing surveys, is to compare scores between respondents according to their country of birth and place of residence, respondents were split into two categories along each of these dimensions.

Country of Birth (COB)	
COB 1	Those born in Australia, other English-speaking countries (such as New Zealand, the UK, North America) and North-Western Europe
COB 2	Those born in non-English speaking countries (such as Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South America), and southern (such Italy, Greece, Spain) and eastern (such as Croatia, Serbia, Poland) Europe

Region	
Metropolitan NSW	Greater Sydney
Regional NSW	Rural centres and associated townships (such as the Hunter, the North and Central Coast, Southern Tablelands, Central West)

Participant responses to both the qualitative and quantitative measures can thereby be compared according to the four groupings (A, B, C, and D) outlined in the table below, where the number of participants per grouping is also included.

Respondent groupings according to COB & Region

	Metropolitan NSW	Regional NSW
COB 1	A(n=888)	B (n=634)
COB 2	C (n=484)	D (n=32)

Qualitative analysis: Phase 1

Prior to administration of the key qualitative measures which includes types of active engagement activities, respondents were asked directly, “Do you actively ‘go out of your way’ to engage with people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds?” to which they simply indicated ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

The amounts and proportions of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ responses from respondents in each of the categories outlined above (A, B, C, D) are shown below.

Proportion of participants who indicate they actively engage with people from different ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds

	Country of Birth 1 (COB 1)		Country of Birth 2 (COB 2)		
	Metropolitan (Group A)	Regional (Group B)	Metropolitan (Group C)	Regional (Group D)	Total
Yes	385 (43%)	141 (29%)	282 (45%)	16 (50%)	824 (40%)
No	503 (57%)	343 (71%)	352 (55%)	16 (50%)	1214 (60%)
Total	888	484	634	32	2038

The 2025 NSW Community Relations Survey (CRS) continues to demonstrate evidence of positive relations between communities from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Across all respondents, 40% indicated that they actively seek to engage with members of their community from ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds which were different to their own. The proportions of respondents indicating 'yes' was relatively similar across both COB and Region groupings, with the exception of COB1 respondents living in regional areas who were significantly less likely to do so (29%) compared to those living in metropolitan areas (43%).

Qualitative analysis: Phase 2

Those who answered 'yes' to the question "Do you actively 'go out of your way' to engage with people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds?" were directed to the open-ended question of "Please list up to three types of things you do in these interactions with people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds".

Four dominant themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the types of activities reported – Socialising, Organised events, Cross-cultural dialogue, and Helping behaviours. Examples of responses are provided below:

Socialising

- "We meet for meals and play sport together"
- "[I] chat to neighbours [and] make an effort to get to know people in a social environment"
- "[I] just talk to them, share stories, talk about football"

Organised events

- "I participate in multicultural workplace events that celebrate various traditions and holidays"
- "Volunteering work in various cultural programs and hosting parties"
- "I would attend cultural events or festivals like Diwali, [and] I would join community or interest-based groups that bring people together"

Cross-cultural dialogue

- "I listen respectfully, ask questions to understand their background, and participate in shared activities to build connection"
- "[I] participate in intercultural exchange activities to experience and respect different cultural lifestyles"
- "Asking about their culture's history and being curious about their traditional practices"

Helping behaviours

- "I regularly mentor people from different backgrounds"
- "[I] help with chores [and] help whenever I can"
- "Helping and respecting everyone from any culture"



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Qualitative analysis: Phase 3

In order to determine the frequency with which each of these types of active engagements occurred, a random sample of 30% of respondents who completed this question was taken from each analysis category (with the exception of COB2/Regional, where all responses were included due to low sample size) and both the number and proportion of each type of activity was calculated. Results are displayed the table below.

Types and proportions of activities engaged in with people from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

	COB 1		COB 2	
	Metropolitan (Group A)	Regional (Group B)	Metropolitan (Group C)	Regional (Group D)
Socialising	81 (45%)	45 (56%)	58 (43%)	13 (59%)
Organised events	50 (28%)	15 (19%)	38 (28%)	6 (27%)
Cross-cultural dialogue	39 (21%)	12 (15%)	28 (20%)	2 (9%)
Helping behaviours	12 (6%)	8 (10%)	12 (9%)	1 (5%)
Total Activities	182	80	136	22

Summary of qualitative analysis

Across all groupings, various kinds of informal socialising, such as having conversations or meeting for meals, was the most common way in which respondents actively engaged with community members from different cultural backgrounds.

Attending organised events ranging from multicultural festivals to volunteering initiatives, was the next most common form of engagement, the proportion of which was slightly lower among COB1 respondents in regional areas.

Verbal exchange and sharing of cultural practices and histories was the third most common form of engagement, the proportion of which was slightly lower in regional areas, regardless of COB status.

Although there is some conceptual overlap with organised volunteering, informal interpersonal helping behaviours were similarly common across groupings.

Quantitative analysis: Active community relations

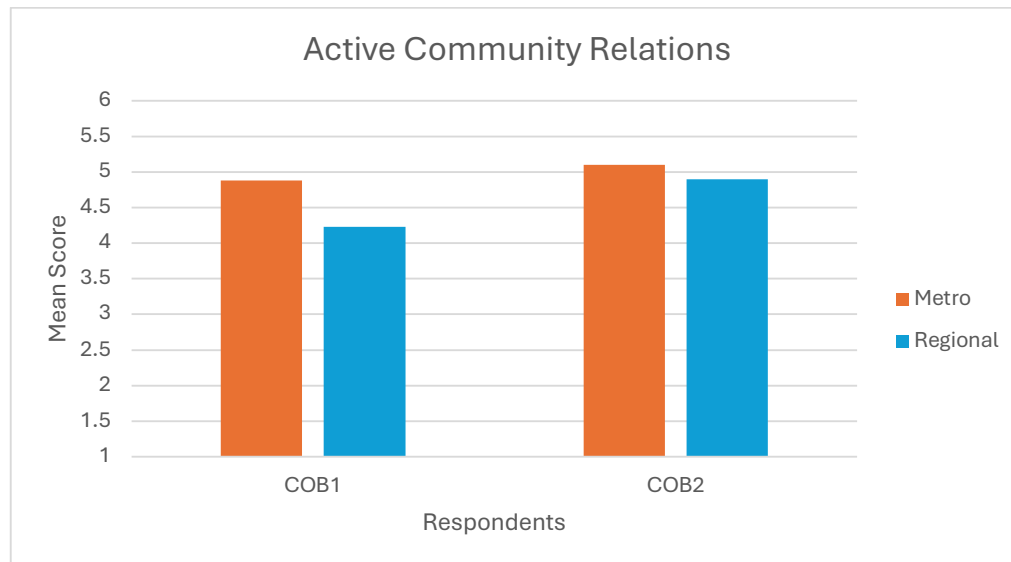
CRS measures for 'active community relations' assess the extent to which respondents actively engage with people from different ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds across three dimensions: general, cultural, and bystander intervention. All items within each measure were combined to form scales and were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Descriptions of all measures and related results for each are outlined opposite.

With regard to the 'overall averages' for each measure, an average above the mid-point of a 7-item scale (above 3.5) means that participants agreed on average with the given statement. Conversely, when the overall average is below 3.5, it means that respondents disagreed on average with the statement.

Active community relations (General)

This measured the extent to which respondents engaged in general behaviours that indicate active relations with people from different cultural backgrounds (such as “I invite people from these different groups to my house”). The overall average was slightly above the mid-point of the scale (M=4.79). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean active community relations scores by COB & Region

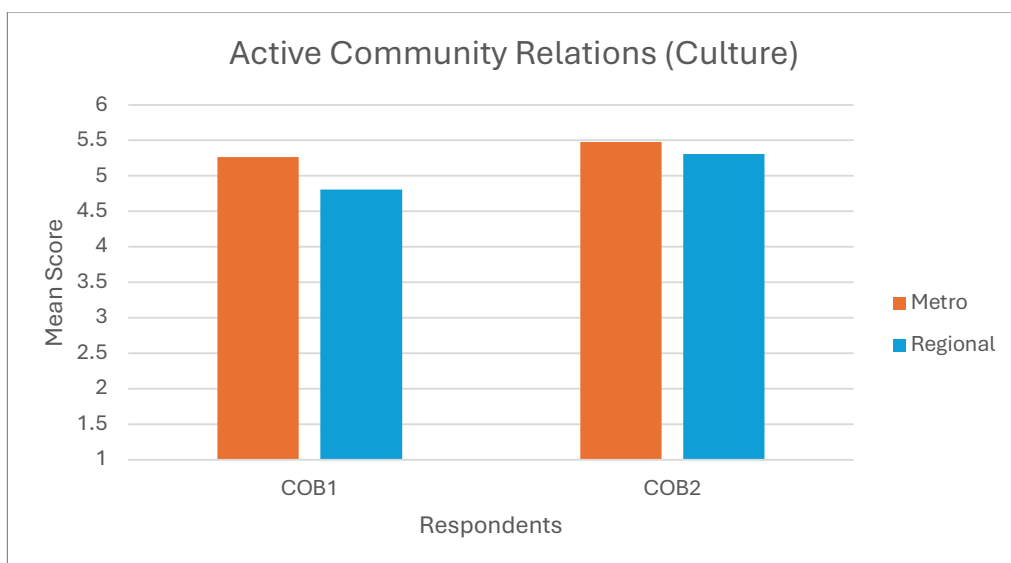


Results show that COB2 respondents (M=5.09) were significantly more likely to engage in active community relations with people from different cultural backgrounds than COB1 respondents (M=4.65). Moreover, across COB1 and COB2 respondents, those living in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely to do so (M=4.97) than those living in regional areas (M=4.27).

Active community relations (Culture)

Items in this scale measured more specifically the extent to which respondents actively engaged in sharing and learning the cultural traditions of people from different cultural backgrounds (“I try to understand the customs and practices of these other groups”). The overall average was significantly above the mid-point of the scale (M=5.23). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean active community relations (culture) scores by COB & Region

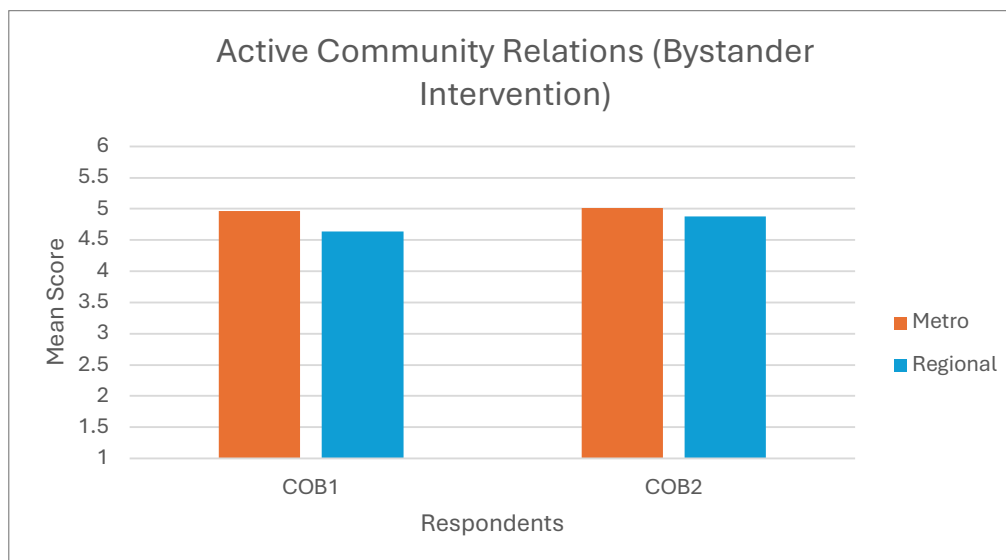


Results show that COB2 respondents (M=5.47) were significantly more likely to seek to understand cultural practices of people from different cultural backgrounds than COB1 respondents (M=5.11). Across COB1 and COB2 respondents, those living in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely to do so (M=5.36) than those living in regional areas (M=4.84).

Active community relations (Bystander intervention)

Items in this scale assessed the extent to which respondents actively behaved in such a way to challenge any stereotyping or discrimination they see against those from different cultural backgrounds ("If I see discrimination against people from these different groups, I actively work to confront it"). The average overall score was above the mid-point of the scale across all respondents (M=4.91). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean active community relations (bystander intervention) scores by COB & Region

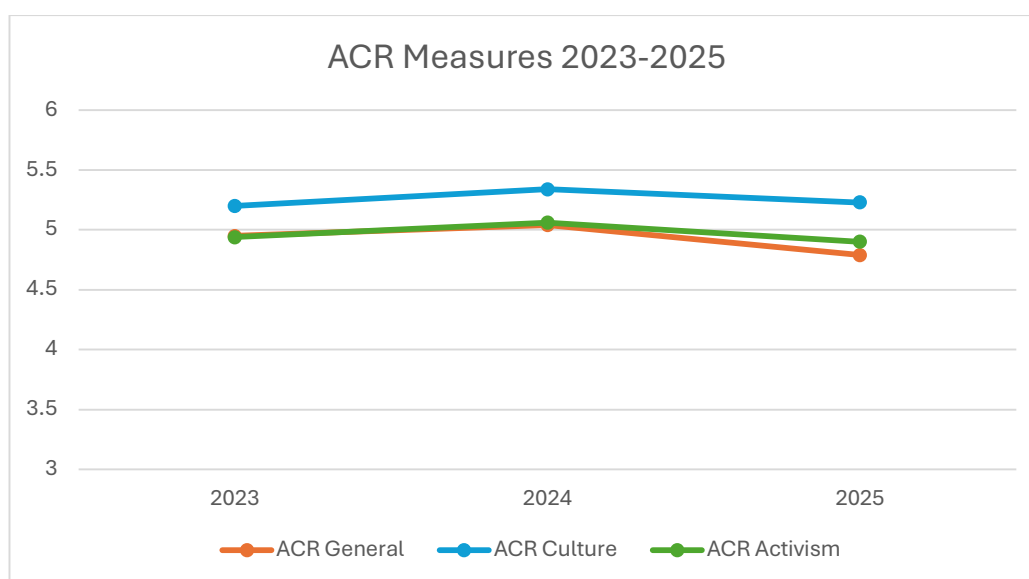


For this measure, there were no significant differences overall between respondent scores for COB1 (M=4.86) and COB2 (M=5.01). However, across COB1 and COB2 respondents, those in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely (M=4.99) than those in regional areas (M=4.65) to engage in behaviours to challenge discrimination against people from different cultural backgrounds in their community.

Average community relations scores: 2023 to 2025

Given the importance of the active community relations measures to the CRS, it is instructive to review how overall mean scores differed across the three years in which the CRS has been administered. The figure below shows how these have varied from 2023-2025.

Mean overall active community relations scores 2023-2025



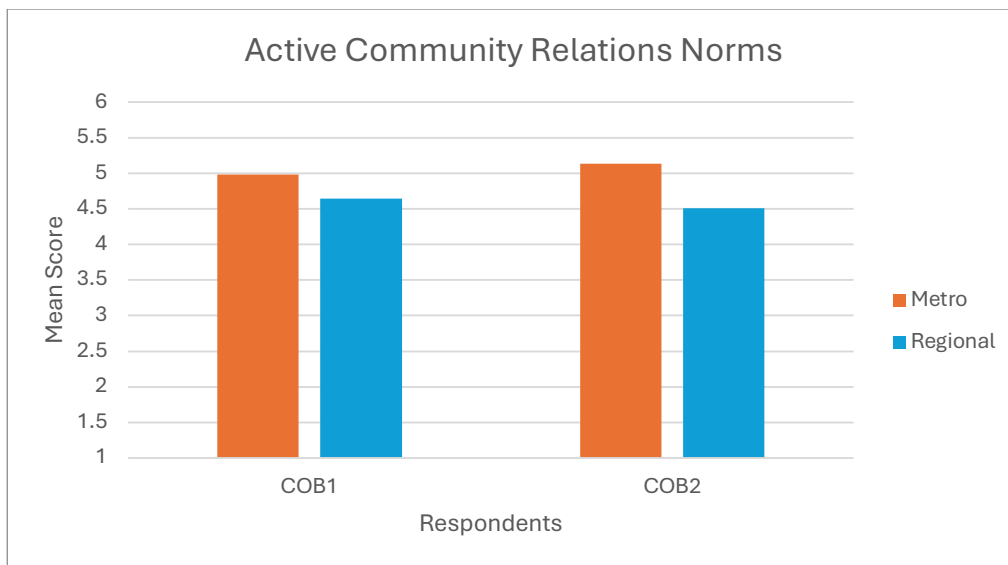
Active community relations norms

In measuring active community relations norms, respondents were asked about the extent to which they thought other people in their community actively engaged with people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds. Respondents were presented with the same items that were used to measure active community relations above, however these items focussed on the perceived behaviours of other people in their community.

Active community relations norms (General)

Items in this scale measured the extent to which respondents believed that others in their community engaged in generic types of active relations with people from different cultural backgrounds ("Other people in my community invite people from these different groups to their house"). The overall average was above the mid-point (M=5.07). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean active community relations norms scores by COB & Region



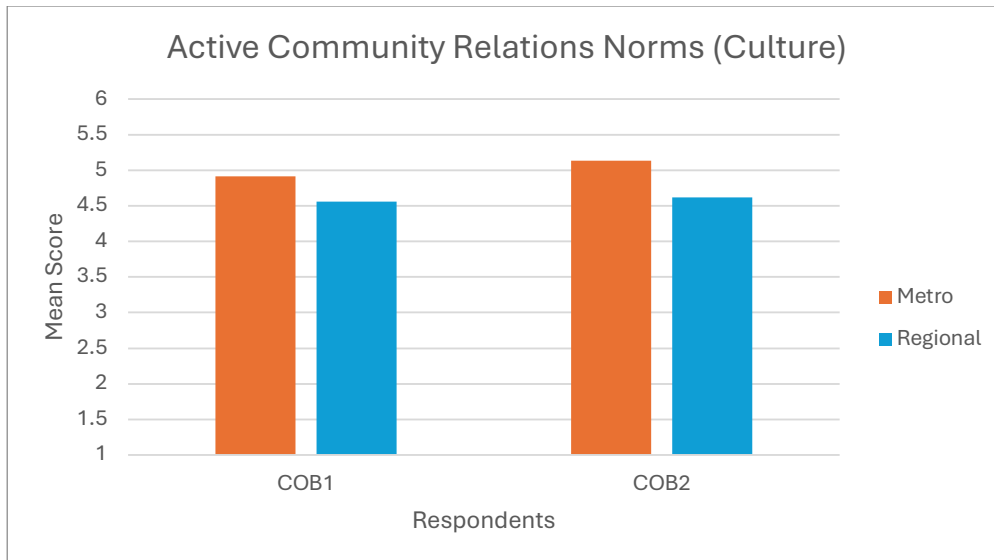
There were no significant differences overall between respondent scores for COB1 (M=4.86) and COB2 (M=5.09) groupings. However, across COB1 and COB2 respondents those in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely (M=5.04) than those in regional areas (M=4.63) to perceive that fellow community members engage in active relations with people from different cultural backgrounds.



Active community relations norms (Culture)

Items in this scale measured more specifically the extent to which respondents believed that others in their community actively shared and learned the cultural traditions of people from different cultural backgrounds (“Other people in my community try to understand the customs and practices of these other groups”). The overall score was above the mid-point of the scale ($M=4.94$). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean active community relations norms (culture) scores by COB & Region

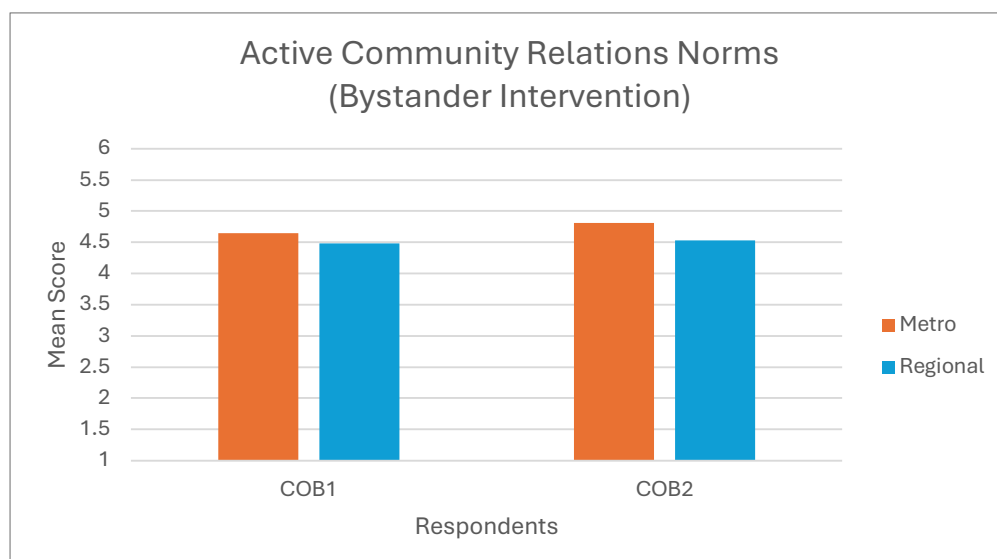


Again, there were no significant differences overall between respondent scores for COB1 ($M=4.79$) and COB2 ($M=5.10$) groupings. However, across COB1 and COB2 respondents, those in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely ($M=5.00$) than those in regional areas ($M=4.57$) to perceive that fellow community members engage in active sharing of cultural practices with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Active community relations norms (Bystander intervention)

Items in this scale assessed the extent to which respondents perceived that fellow community members try to challenge any stereotyping or discrimination they see against those from different cultural backgrounds (“If other people in my community see discrimination against people from these different groups, they actively work to confront it”). The average overall score was only very slightly above the mid-point of the scale ($M=4.66$). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean active community relations norms (activism) scores by COB & Region

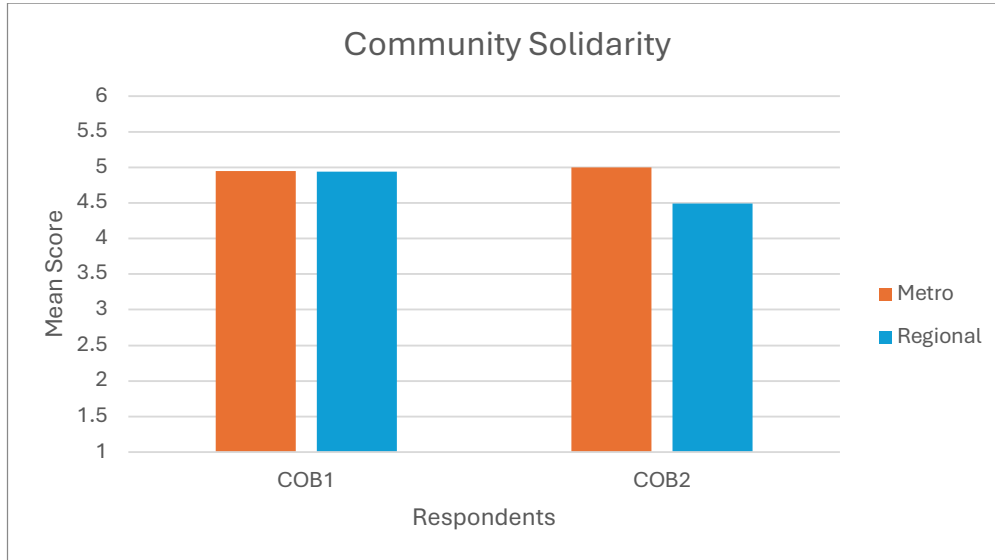


Again, there were no significant differences overall between respondent scores for COB1 ($M=4.59$) and COB2 ($M=4.79$) groupings. However, across COB1 and COB2 respondents, those in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely ($M=4.72$) than those in regional areas ($M=4.48$) to perceive that fellow community members actively challenge discrimination against people from different cultural backgrounds.

Community solidarity

A six-item scale measured perceptions of solidarity and ‘togetherness’ within respondents’ communities (“People can depend on one another”). All items were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale and were combined to form a single scale. The overall average was above the mid-point of the scale ($M=4.96$). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean community solidarity scores by COB & Region

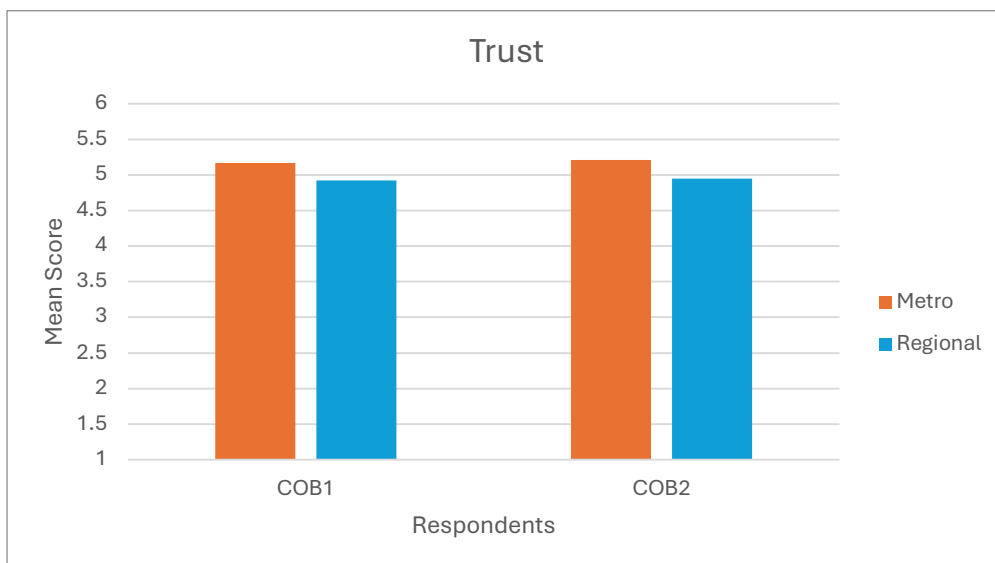


Although there were overall differences between COB and region groupings, this effect was driven by an effect within COB2 grouping only. In other words, there was higher perceived community solidarity among COB2 respondents in metropolitan areas ($M=5.01$) than in regional areas ($M=4.49$), whereas this difference was not observed between COB1 groupings.

Trust

A series of three items measured the extent to which respondents had trust in fellow community members (“People in my community can be trusted”). All items were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale and were combined to form a single scale. Overall scores were above the mid-point of the scale ($M=5.12$). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean trust scores by COB & Region



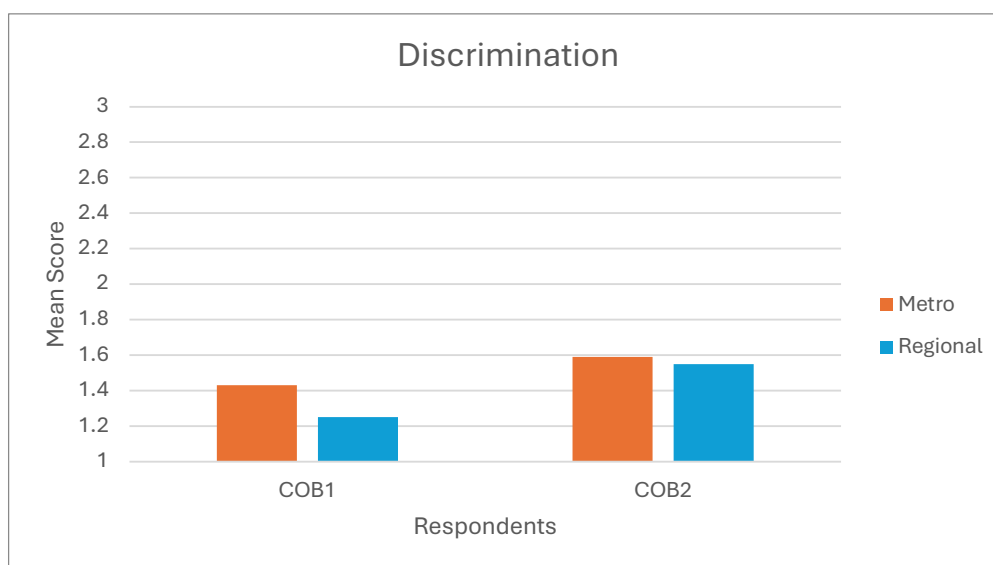
Results demonstrated that there were no significant differences overall between respondent scores for COB1 ($M=5.08$) and COB2 ($M=5.19$) groupings. However, across COB1 and COB2 respondents, those in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely ($M=5.19$) than those in regional areas ($M=4.92$) to believe that fellow community members could be trusted.

Discrimination

A series of six items measured the extent to which respondents experience discrimination in various situations (“I experience discrimination... in the workplace, when renting or buying a house, when dealing with government departments or public services, in a restaurant, in my local area, on social media”). For this construct, responses were again measured on a modified 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 not at all – 5 all the time). Overall scores were significantly below the mid-point of the scale (M=1.44; noting the mid-point is 2.5 for this scale). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Results show that COB2 respondents were significantly more likely to experience discrimination in their local community (M=1.59) than COB1 respondents (M=1.37). However, no significant difference was found in levels of discrimination between those living in metropolitan areas (M=1.49) and those living in regional areas (M=1.27).

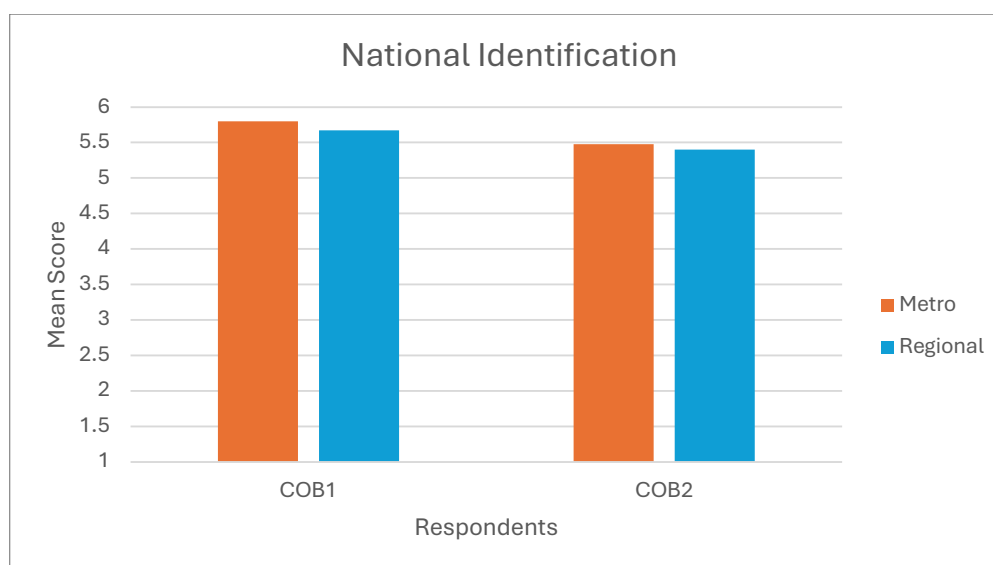
Mean discrimination scores by COB & Region



National identification

A series of five items measured the extent to which respondents identified with Australia as a nation (“I have a lot in common with other Australians”). These items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 strongly disagree – 7 strongly agree). Overall scores were significantly above the mid-point of the scale (M=5.64). Findings for specific respondent categories are displayed in the figure below.

Mean national identification scores by COB & Region



Results show that COB1 respondents overall identified more strongly with Australia as a nation (M=5.76) than COB2 respondents (M=5.48). However, there was no significant differences in national identification between respondents living in metropolitan areas (M=5.67) than those living in regional areas (M=5.65).

Comparing 2025 and 2024 findings

Comparing 2025 to 2024 CRS findings, the number of respondents overall who indicated that they do actively engage with community members from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds declined from 49% to 40%, with the difference being most marked among COB1 respondents in regional areas, with only 29% answering 'yes' (compared to 40% in 2024). As the CRS is still a relatively new survey, it is hard to account for this change with any confidence. It would be premature to draw any policy conclusions from this result without the data to establish longitudinal trends. Certainly, though, the overall scores from the 2025 CRS suggest a need to identify opportunities to foster positive community relations in regional areas.

Overall scores (i.e., across COB and Region groupings) on the measure of general active community relations between people from different cultural backgrounds were significantly lower in 2025 ($M=4.79$) than in 2024 ($M=5.04$). However, for the other two measures of active community relations (Culture, Bystander intervention), scores were similar to those seen in 2024.

When comparing respondent groupings, 2025 scores mirrored those of 2024. Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely to engage in general active community relations than those in regional areas. However, in contrast to 2024 findings, COB2 respondents scored higher on this measure than COB1 respondents.

In 2024, there were no significant differences between either COB or region groupings on the active community relations (Culture) measure. The 2025 results showed that COB2 respondents scored higher than COB1 respondents and that those living in metropolitan areas scored higher than those living in regional areas.

Mirroring 2024 findings, there were no significant differences between COB groupings on the active community relations (Bystander intervention) measure, however, those living in metropolitan areas scored higher than those living in regional areas in 2025.

Across all three measures of active community relations Norms, 2025 findings were similar to those observed in 2024. Those living in metropolitan areas scored higher than those living in regional areas, whereas there was no difference as a function of COB groupings.

In 2024, COB1 respondents perceived higher community solidarity than COB2 respondents. COB2 respondents scored higher in 2025, but in metropolitan areas only.

As was the case in 2024, COB2 respondents reported higher levels of discrimination than COB1 respondents in 2025. However, whereas in 2024 those living in metropolitan areas reported higher levels of discrimination than those living in regional areas, no differences across region groupings emerged in 2025.

NSW Community Relations Survey (CRS): Why is it important?

The NSW Community Relations Survey (CRS) develops and improves our understanding of community relations, firstly by including novel measures assessing active community relations ("I invite people from different groups to my house") and community norms ("What others do"). These enable a move beyond a more passive assessment of community relations such as attitudes toward a more definitive understanding of how respondents seek out and engage in actual behaviours characteristic of positive community relations.

Given that for all measures there is specific emphasis on community members from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds, the CRS can inform in new ways an assessment of the state of proactive and cross-cultural community relations. Positive community relations prevail when community members themselves are active in creating inclusive communities where people feel they belong and are respected and have opportunities for personal development.

These insights can inform choices that individuals, businesses, community groups and governments make about what should be done and what people are willing to do and support to strengthen the multicultural community they would like to see thrive.

This CRS helps us to gain better insights into the state of community relations. It enables more understanding of exposure, norms and willingness to be more proactive in building a connected community. There is much to indicate that community members feel welcome, supported and valued. The more this continues, the greater our community wellbeing and prosperity in future.

Monitoring and addressing issues impacting on community harmony: 2025 Report from the NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) Committee

About COMPLAN

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 under Section 13(1)(f) 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 agency 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 incident reporting, community engagement networks and advisory structures, community sentiment analysis, social media listening, environmental scanning, social cohesion mapping and other agency capabilities.

The COMPLAN Committee, chaired by Multicultural NSW, is a senior officers group comprised of representatives from the NSW Police Force, Anti-Discrimination NSW, NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, NSW Reconstruction Authority, NSW Premier's Department, Multicultural NSW, and Local Government NSW. Other agencies are invited to join COMPLAN Committee meetings as needed 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 (PPRR).

Since its establishment in 2018 and in accordance with COMPLAN reporting requirements, the COMPLAN Committee has provided an annual statement outlining its assessment and responses to community harmony risks. The statement below summarises the COMPLAN Committee's activities and its assessment of issues impacting community harmony in 2025.

Meetings in 2025

The COMPLAN Committee held nine meetings in 2025:

- four were regular quarterly meetings scheduled under COMPLAN Preparedness arrangements (13 February, 8 May, 7 August, and 13 November).
- five additional out-of-session meetings were convened under COMPLAN Prevention and Response arrangements:
 - 1 October – to monitor community sentiment and community harmony risks in the lead up to the two-year commemoration of the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel and to assess community harmony risks in the lead up to the second 'March for Australia' protest on 19 October 2025.
 - 14 December (two meetings), 15 December and 19 December – four urgent out-of-session meetings were called in response to the declared terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025.

In addition to these meetings, Multicultural NSW issued five notifications to the COMPLAN Committee under COMPLAN Preparedness and Response arrangements:

- 20 August – notification about the planned nation-wide anti-immigration 'March for Australia' protests scheduled for 31 August 2025.
- 28 August – follow-up notification providing updates on anti-immigration protests and counter-protests planned for 31 August 2025.
- 7 October – notification regarding protests scheduled on the second anniversary of the October 7 attacks in Israel.
- 23 November – notification about an upcoming Hizb ut-Tahrir 2025 National Conference.
- 14 December – urgent notification issued following reports of an active shooter incident in Bondi (prior to its official classification as a terrorist attack).

Global issues and events continued to impact community harmony locally in 2025.

Understanding local and global trends

Under COMPLAN Preparedness arrangements, the COMPLAN Committee provides a forum for collecting and sharing information, advice, research and best practice relating to community harmony and community resilience. In 2025, this included:

- a presentation by Matt Crocker, Strategic Adviser at the Susan McKinnon Foundation, on the findings of the McKinnon Poll Report *Partisanship, polarisation and social cohesion in Australia* (13 February meeting).
- a presentation by the Professor Kate Reynolds and Dr Ben Jones from the Australian National University on the key findings of the second NSW Community Relations Survey, commissioned by Multicultural NSW (8 May meeting).
- a presentation by Steve Killelea AM, Founder and Executive Chair of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), on the key findings of IEP's 2025 Global Peace Index; and a discussion with Lea Perekrests, Director of Partnerships at IEP, on IEP's NSW Global Links: Partnerships for Peace project funded under the Multicultural NSW COMPACT Program (7 August meeting).
- a presentation by Anthea Hancocks, CEO of the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, and Dr James O'Donnell, Lead Investigator of the Mapping Social Cohesion study on the key findings from the 2025 Mapping Social Cohesion report and the implications for NSW (13 November meeting).

Addressing the local impacts of global issues and events

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

Global issues and events continued to impact community harmony locally in 2025. The ongoing crisis in Gaza and the regional escalation of the conflict in the Middle East was a standing agenda item for the COMPLAN Committee throughout the year. The Committee also addressed the impacts on local communities arising from regime change and the persecution of minorities in Syria, the 12-day war between Israel and Iran, the humanitarian crisis and civil war in Sudan, conflict in Congo and the DRC, and controversy over the screening of the documentary *Russians at War*.

Members shared insights into community sentiment and strategies to support impacted communities. For example, the Department of Education provided ongoing support to students, staff and school communities impacted by the ongoing war in Gaza, including through EDM messages to school staff, the operation of the recently established religious intolerance helpline, and a webinar for school principals featuring a conversation with Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, and the CEO of Multicultural NSW.

Concerns about rising incidents of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate linked to the war in Gaza remained a key focus for the COMPLAN Committee. Early 2025 was troubled by a series of antisemitic vandalism and arson attacks on Jewish properties and synagogues in both Sydney and Melbourne, a continuation of antisemitic incidents occurring throughout the summer of 2024-25. The Premier's Department produced bi-weekly community sentiment reports and convened weekly meetings of the Premier's Prevention Panel on Hate and Extremism from the start of the year in response to the issue.

In August, the Prime Minister and the Director General of ASIO announced that at least two of these attacks were foreign interference operations orchestrated by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRCG), commissioned by local organised crime networks, leading the Australian Government to expel the Iranian Ambassador. COMPLAN members shared insights into community sentiment, noting that many members of the Iranian Australian community are strongly opposed to the Iranian regime and welcomed the expulsion, while other parts of the NSW community treated the announcement with scepticism, suggesting a need to build more trust in government.

The COMPLAN Committee meeting in February came the day after widespread media coverage and public outrage over antisemitic threats made by two nurses employed at Bankstown Hospital during a recorded online chat with an Israeli content creator. NSW Health responded quickly and publicly reaffirmed its zero-tolerance approach to hatred, racism and discrimination, prioritising culturally safe communication with the community and staff. The NSW Health Secretary and Health Minister stressed how shocked and deeply saddened the NSW Health community was by the incident and provided clear and consistent reassurance it did not reflect the values of the public health system or its dedicated staff. They strongly reiterated NSW

Health's commitment to continuing to provide high-quality, safe, and compassionate care to people of all cultures, backgrounds, identities, and beliefs. Multicultural NSW, Premier's Department and other COMPLAN members supported NSW Health with its rapid response.

Responding to concerns about rising anti-Muslim hate, the NSW Government announced in June \$1 million in funding for the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) for the Action Against Islamophobia initiative, which supports victims of anti-Muslim hate. Multicultural NSW, Premier's Department, Department of Education and the NSW Police Force are providing advice and support to ensure the initiative complements existing strategies for combatting racism and religious intolerance and established official mechanisms for reporting incidents and supporting victims.

Multicultural NSW called an out-of-session COMPLAN Committee meeting on 1 October in preparation for the two-year commemoration of the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel. Members noted that the one-year commemoration in 2024 did not give rise to any significant community harmony risks, and this was also the case in 2025.

Throughout the year, pro-Palestine protests continued to be a weekly occurrence in Sydney, culminating in the large-scale 'March for Humanity' protest on the Sydney Harbour Bridge in August. The COMPLAN Committee noted that, while presenting significant resourcing and logistical challenges for the NSW Police Force, the protests were lawful and peaceful with police reporting no major incidents. The COMPLAN Committee acknowledged the efforts of NSW Police in maintaining public safety throughout the year.

Addressing community safety concerns within the Chinese Australian community

While recognising that global issues and events can have local consequences, COMPLAN also recognises that local issues may have local, state, national or international consequences.

In May, the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Sydney issued a safety alert in response to the series of assaults committed against people from Chinese and other Asian backgrounds across Sydney's inner east, most notably an unprovoked assault on a Chinese couple in Eastgardens.

The NSW Police Force charged seven young people in connection with the Eastgardens assault, most of whom were first time offenders aged between 12 and 16. Despite police confirming there was no evidence to suggest the assault was racially motivated, the perception that these incidents were racially motivated attracted significant attention on Chinese social media channels both in Australia and in China. An online petition calling for tougher youth crime laws garnered over 29,000 signatures within a week after the Eastgardens incident.

Recognising the urgent need to address community safety concerns, Multicultural NSW, the NSW Police Force, the City of Sydney and Randwick City Council hosted forums to provide reassurance to the community that Sydney is a safe and welcoming place to live and to visit.

Multicultural NSW issued a public statement underlining a zero-tolerance stance on racism and hate and worked closely with Chinese community leaders, the Chinese Consulate-General and NSW Police to reassure the community.

These efforts continued to July, with Multicultural NSW and the NSW Police Force hosting an online community safety briefing for Chinese Australian community members, universities, and local councils. Acknowledging that there is likely an under-reporting of hate incidents within the Chinese Australian community, the forum encouraged community members to report incidents directly to police and provided translated resources to promote within the community.

Monitoring neo-Nazi activity and responding to racist propaganda at anti-immigration protests

Multicultural NSW issued two COMPLAN Notifications ahead of the anti-immigration 'March for Australia' protests in Sydney and other major capital cities on 31 August. Members shared information highlighting an elevated level of concern about the protest among migrant communities, including Indian, African and Chinese Australian community members, with some community members reporting they felt unsafe to travel to or work in the Sydney CBD on that day.

Some of the racist propaganda circulated during the protest specifically targeted the Indian Australian community. Concerns within the community were compounded by some divisive political commentary about Indian migrants around

the same time. In response, Multicultural NSW facilitated a roundtable on 9 September with the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Multiculturalism and 40 leaders from the Indian Australian community. The meeting provided a platform for community leaders to share their concerns directly with the Premier. A joint media release by the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Multiculturalism acknowledged the contribution of the Indian Australian community to NSW and Australia and reaffirmed the NSW Government's commitment to the Indian Australian community.

At its out-of-session meeting on 1 October, the COMPLAN Committee discussed the second 'March for Australia' protest planned in Sydney on 19 October. Members were again asked to share any information relating to community harmony risks. The protest proceeded on 19 October, with similar rhetoric being promoted, but with fewer people attending.

The presence of neo-Nazi National Socialist Network (NSN) members at the first 'March for Australia' rally generated significant political and media attention. There appeared to be some degree of coordination between the NSN and the rally organisers. The appearance of NSN members without face coverings also marked a significant shift in the neo-Nazi group's strategy in 2025, which also included the announcement of its intention to form a political party called 'White Australia'. A letterbox leafleting campaign also saw racist White Australia flyers appear in multiple suburbs across Sydney, raising significant concerns among local community members, local councils and local MPs.

An NSN rally staged outside the NSW Parliament on 8 November marked a highly concerning development, with the rally managing to proceed legally despite promoting antisemitic and neo-Nazi propaganda. The Premier and Commissioner of Police made several media statements about the 8 November rally. The Multicultural NSW Advisory Board and NSW Faith Affairs Council issued a joint statement on 9 November 2025 strongly condemning the rally.

At its 13 November meeting, the COMPLAN Committee noted the ASIO's Director-General's statement, made during his 4 November 2025 Lowy Lecture, that the NSN presents a threat to social cohesion. He also named the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir as presenting a similar threat to social cohesion and noted the two groups use similar tactics.

The NSW Police Force advised that it continues to monitor the NSN and will provide updates to the COMPLAN Committee as needed.

Activating COMPLAN in response to the antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach

COMPLAN recognises that a terrorist incident can present imminent community harmony risks. COMPLAN supports state counter terrorism arrangements and the functions of the Crisis Policy Committee by responding to community harmony risks and supporting social cohesion recovery in the event of a terrorist incident.

Multicultural NSW immediately activated COMPLAN Response phase arrangements in response to the antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on Sunday 14 December. The attack targeted the Jewish community while it was celebrating the 'Chanukah by the Sea' festival. The event marked the first night of Chanukah (or Hannukah), which traditionally celebrates the power of light over darkness. Fifteen innocent people were killed, and 42 people were injured, including two police officers. The Commissioner of Police declared the attack to be a terrorist act, alleging it was motivated by antisemitism and influenced by ISIS.

The COMPLAN Committee recognises that incidents of terrorism can have profound psychological and emotional impacts, firstly on victims and families, and also beyond those directly affected. Supporting community wellbeing and community harmony requires trauma-informed communications and mental health support.

The COMPLAN Response phase includes specific measures to counter divisive influences, limit harmful consequences, and provide support and relief for affected persons and communities. Below is a high-level summary of measures taken under the COMPLAN Response phase from 14 December and through the week of the Bondi terrorist attack. This summary does not include the responses of Combat Agencies or actions taken under whole-of-government emergency management arrangements in response to the Bondi attack – it focusses on the role of COMPLAN in managing community harmony risks arising from the attack.

A. Coordinate a whole of NSW Government response to a situation that may have harmful consequences for community harmony:

Multicultural NSW issued a COMPLAN Notification immediately following reports of an active shooter incident at Bondi Beach on 14 December, before details of the attack were yet known, and convened an urgent out-of-session COMPLAN Committee meeting at 8:20pm on the night of the attack.

A second COMPLAN Committee meeting was held that night at 10:30pm. A third out-of-session meeting was held the next day, 15 December, and a fourth on 19 December.

B. Facilitate effective, coordinated engagement and communication with affected communities:

On 15 December, the COMPLAN Community Sentiment Coordination Working Group was established as an online team to coordinate engagement and communication with affected communities and to share information on community sentiment and responses in real time.

The Working Group coordinated multi-agency insights from community engagement networks including the NSW Police Force Multicultural Community Liaison Officer (MCLO) network, the Premier's Department Connected Communities team, the Anti-Discrimination NSW community engagement and policy teams, the Department of Communities and Justice Multicultural Policy and Engagement team, the Multicultural NSW Community Engagement and Community Resilience teams, and multi-agency teams deployed to the NSW Reconstruction Authority's Bondi Community Support Hub from 19 December to assist all those affected, directly and indirectly, by the attack.

Multicultural NSW and the Premier's Department supported the Premier's Office in facilitating the Premier's meeting with Jewish community leaders on 15 December.

The COMPLAN Community Sentiment Coordination Working Group collated statements of solidarity with the Jewish community issued by a wide range of cultural and religious community organisations. Drawing on this spirit of solidarity, Multicultural NSW launched the 'We are stronger together' online pledge on 17 December to allow community members to register their support and solidarity with the Jewish community.

C. Assist and empower credible, authoritative messengers to develop, deliver and disseminate, through community networks and the media, effective messages to counter divisive influences, de-escalate actual or potential community tensions, and promote community harmony:

Multicultural NSW issued a joint statement from the NSW Faith Affairs Council and the Multicultural NSW Advisory Board on 14 December, calling for calm and reinforcing messages of solidarity. The NSW Faith Affairs Council also convened an emergency meeting on 15 December, with a media statement released that day to amplify the message of interfaith solidarity. The NSW Faith Affairs Council endorsed the 'One Mitzvah for Bondi'

campaign promoting solidarity with the Bondi victims through small acts of kindness.

The Premier's Department coordinated engagement with mayors and Members of Parliament and prepared a whole-of-government strategic communications pack for communities and local government that were shared through COMPLAN agency networks.

Multicultural NSW facilitated an online community forum for over 400 community members on 17 December. Rabbi Mendel Kastel shared his reflections on the powerful messages of support and solidarity the Jewish community has received from the wider community. The Hon. Steve Kamper MP, Minister for Multiculturalism, and NSW Police Force Assistant Commissioner Brett McFadden APM also delivered messages to the community.

Multicultural NSW collated and disseminated statements of support and solidarity from community organisations through the COMPACT Alliance, which in turn encouraged more community partners to release messages of solidarity.

D. Support communities and individuals directly affected by community harmony risks, threats or hazards:

On 15 December, the NSW Police Force reactivated Operation Shelter with increased support and resources, including public place patrols and proactive taskings to promote community safety and reduce fear. Multicultural NSW deployed senior staff to Operation Shelter to provide advice and support coordinated engagement with affected communities, and as a liaison point with the COMPLAN Committee. NSW Police Family Liaison Officers were activated to support victims' families.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) assisted the NSW Police with the establishment and operation of a reception centre in Coogee from 15 to 31 December 2025, supporting 460 people with 39 disaster welfare staff deployed. DCJ coordinated support from government agencies and community partners, including the Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network, NSW Health, Transport for NSW and community volunteers, to deliver services including access to mental health support. DCJ also produced a Victims Services fact sheet, established a critical incident line, supported expedited coronial processes with cultural and religious sensitivity, and ensured social workers provided timely information to families.

The NSW Reconstruction Authority established the Bondi Community Support Hub from 19 December to assist all those affected, directly and indirectly,

by the attack. The NSW Reconstruction Authority and Premier's Department developed and launched a public appeal in partnership with Rotary.

NSW Health initiated a mental health disaster response to ensure help was available for all those who needed it, with trained mental health clinicians working on the ground in Bondi and Coogee in the days and weeks following the attack. Existing mental health resources in the local area (such as Safe Haven, Headspace) also surged to increase capacity and ensure the right care was available to all, while there was increased staff coverage on NSW Health's dedicated Mental Health Line.

The NSW Government also worked with Jewish House and partners in the NGO and community mental health sectors to ensure culturally appropriate services were available for those who needed support.

The Department of Education supported school communities in last week of term and provided additional counselling services and security for identified schools. It also issued resources on supporting school communities in times of crisis, including translated materials.

The Premier's Department engaged mayors and general managers of local councils and supported Waverley Council directly in managing spontaneous memorials. Local Government NSW assisted councils.

The COMPLAN Committee Community Sentiment Working Group placed individual calls to 75 community leaders in the week of the attack to offer support and keep lines of communication open. This included significant engagement with Jewish community and religious leaders as the community most directly impacted by the attack. Recognising the whole-of-community impacts of the attack, the Working Group also engaged Muslim, Arab, Pakistani, Syrian, and other affected communities to understand their needs and offer support.

E. Disseminate relevant, accurate and timely information to member agencies and community stakeholders surrounding community harmony risks and NSW Government responses:

The COMPLAN Community Sentiment Coordination Working Group online team enabled members agencies to share information on community sentiment and responses in real time. The Working Group disseminated a sentiment analysis report on community engagement undertaken in the first week following the attack.

The Premier's Department prepared a whole-of-government strategic communications toolkit for communities and local government that were shared through member agency networks.

The NSW Government website was the centralised information hub and was updated regularly with information on victim services, government support services including mental health services, public appeals, the 'One Mitzvah for Bondi' campaign, and other relevant information.

F. Maintain vigilance in monitoring and managing situations with the aim of de-escalating and preventing the further escalation of the situation, and minimising further harmful consequences for community harmony:

The COMPLAN Committee assesses that the Bondi terrorist attack will have consequences for community harmony over the short, medium and long term. The Committee remains vigilant to emerging community harmony risks within this heightened risk environment. While the report only covers the 2025 calendar year, the Committee will continue to monitor and manage the situation in 2026.

Building COMPLAN's Preparedness capability

In June, Multicultural NSW engaged risk management consultant Tigertail to deliver a capability building project designed to enhance the effective implementation of COMPLAN across the four plan phases of Preparedness, Prevention, Response and Recovery (PPRR).

In line with COMPLAN Preparedness arrangements, the project will:

- work with COMPLAN member agencies to ensure they have the capability, capacity, authority, and processes in place to fulfil their roles and responsibilities under COMPLAN.
- develop, test and implement a robust methodology for identifying and assessing community harmony risks.
- develop supporting plans for COMPLAN that support the effective activation of community networks and communication channels during any COMPLAN plan phase (PPRR).
- exercise, review and evaluate COMPLAN and recommend any appropriate revisions to the plan and/or supporting plans to ensure COMPLAN remains effective, appropriate and responsive to developing trends.

Following the terrorist attack in Bondi on 14 December, the project has been re-scoped to ensure that lessons learned from the activation of COMPLAN in response to the Bondi attack can be incorporated to support COMPLAN's planning and preparedness capability into the future.

The project recognises that, in an increasingly complex global environment, sustained collaboration, transparent communication and trusted community partnerships remain essential to safeguarding community harmony in NSW

Submission of 2025 COMPLAN Committee report

This report is compiled in accordance with COMPLAN arrangement 15(G) and is submitted to the Chief Executive Officer of Multicultural NSW with the aim of informing the 2025 annual report by Multicultural NSW on the state of community relations in NSW as affected by cultural diversity (Community Relations Report). The report has been reviewed and endorsed by all COMPLAN member agencies.



⁴³ See Community Relations Reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023 at <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/resources/the-state-of-community-relations-in-nsw/>

Good Practice in Multicultural Policy and Service Delivery

The Multicultural Principles are the policy of the State

The Multicultural NSW Act 2000 (the Act) establishes the Multicultural Principles as the policy of the state, requiring public authorities to observe the Multicultural Principles in the conduct of their affairs. NSW was the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce a deliberate, state-wide policy that recognises the value of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

For many years, the Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP) served as the whole-of-government framework for assessing the effectiveness of public authorities in observing the Multicultural Principles. NSW Government agencies were required to develop Multicultural Plans and to report on their progress to Multicultural NSW. Multicultural NSW provided highlights from agency reports in its annual Community Relations Report to the NSW Parliament.

As a commitment under its strategic plan 2021–2025, *Stronger Together*, Multicultural NSW conducted a review of the MPSP. The findings informed a refreshed framework, the new Multicultural Outcomes Reporting Framework (the Framework). As 2025 marked a transition period between the review of the MPSP and the introduction of the new Framework, agencies were not required to report to Multicultural NSW for this year.

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The Multicultural Principles are the policy of the State

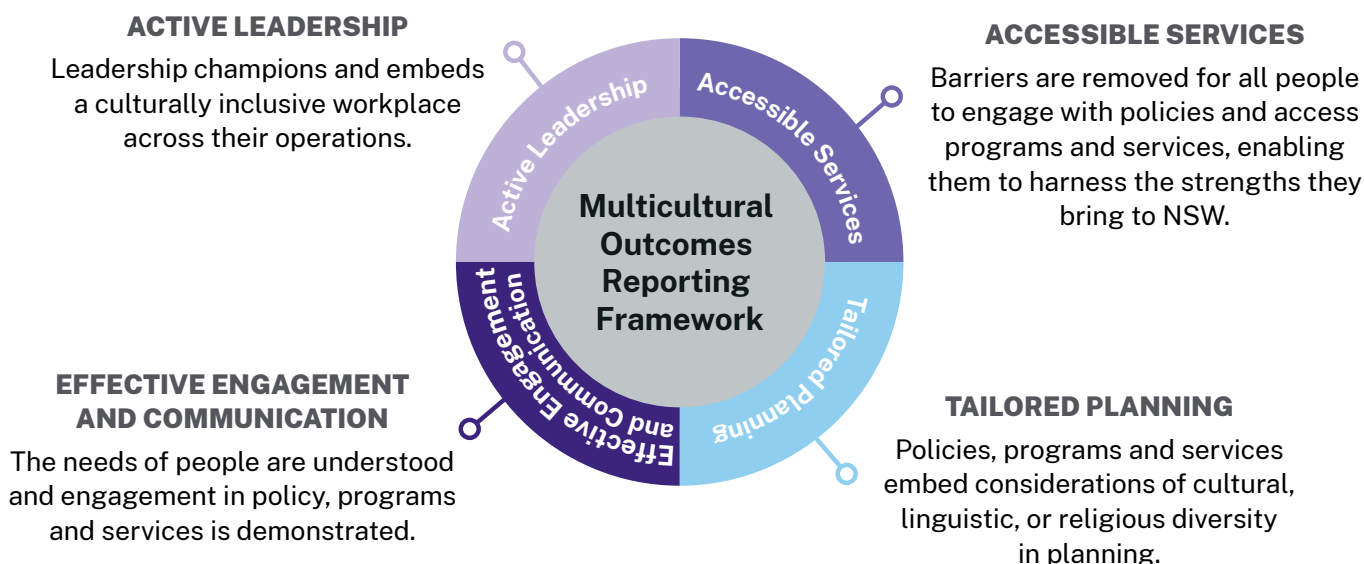
Introducing the Multicultural Outcomes Reporting Framework

Multicultural Outcomes Reporting Framework (the Framework) aims to improve the delivery of multicultural policy, programs and services across the NSW Government and to support agencies in meeting their obligations under the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*.

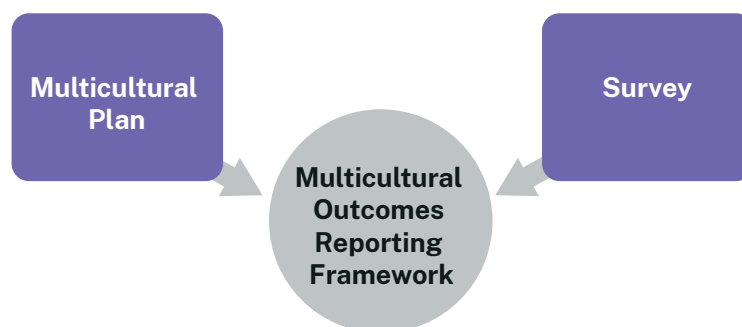
NSW Government agencies will be able to monitor their progress against the Framework's outcomes-based indicators by collecting and reporting qualitative and quantitative data. This will support continuous, data-informed improvements in multicultural outcomes across NSW, including:

- **Strengthening measurement and accountability** through capturing data that reveals long-term trends, informs policy adjustments and demonstrates progress.
- **Fostering collaboration and learning** by standardising reporting and creating opportunities to share best practice.
- **Improving community outcomes** through person-centred, tailored initiatives that foster social cohesion.
- **Facilitating inclusive decision-making** by promoting diversity in leadership and ensuring lived experience shapes outcomes.
- **Building trust in government** by integrating cultural responsiveness into the design of, policies, programs and services.

The Framework is a renewed commitment to embedding multicultural policy systematically and consists of four focus areas:



Reporting under the new Framework will now be informed by agency Multicultural Plans and a new annual survey that will collect qualitative and quantitative data from across the NSW Government, to be reported in the annual Community Relations Report from 2026 onwards.



CASE STUDY

Good practice in multicultural policy and service delivery.

Breaking the language barrier – how NSW Police are bringing interpreters to every beat.

NSW is one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the country, with almost a third of its residents born overseas and more than one in four people speaking a language other than English at home. For frontline NSW Police Force officers, this diversity brings both rewards and challenges to their everyday engagement with the community.

Until recently, NSW Police officers faced the longstanding operational challenge of how to communicate effectively, safely and respectfully with people with limited English proficiency, particularly in high pressure or time sensitive situations.

For years, the options available were limited. Officers relied on outdated phrase books they developed themselves, improvised with the help of family members at a scene, or transported individuals back to a police station to access interpreters. These workarounds slowed down interactions, heightened stress for everyone involved, and diverted officers away from urgent community needs. At a time when the NSW Police Force is responding to more than 1.8 million dispatched jobs a year, every minute regained in the field matters.

Recognising this challenge, Multicultural NSW partnered with the NSW Police Force to rethink how language support could be delivered on the frontline. The result is Language+, a purpose-built mobile app that places professional interpreters and accurately translated phrases directly into the hands of police officers, anywhere, anytime.

Language+ was developed through a collaborative process that involved operational police, police Multicultural Liaison Officers, translators, interpreters, and community members from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Multicultural NSW spent significant time embedded in policing environments, visiting stations, observing frontline shifts, and testing prototypes with officers to ensure the tool reflected the realities of policing. As there was no existing model to replicate, the solution had to be built from the ground up.



Language+ App



The app provides more than 200 commonly used policing phrases, each professionally translated into 32 languages and recorded by interpreters to ensure clarity and accuracy. These phrases were selected from across key policing functions, including Highway Patrol, Water Police, Domestic and Family Violence units, and general duties. The audio functionality supports varying levels of literacy and comprehension, enabling officers to communicate with confidence across a broad range of scenarios.

Critically, Language+ also delivers instant, one-tap access to professional interpreters, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across 120 languages. To make this possible, Multicultural NSW refined its own operations, establishing a dedicated, round-the-clock interpreter line designed specifically for emergency police use.

Language+ is now available on more than 12,000 NSW Police Force devices, deployed statewide across urban, regional and remote communities. In its first week alone, the app saw more than

1,500 unique users, reflecting immediate frontline demand. Usage continues to grow, particularly in areas with high linguistic diversity and in regional settlement communities where interpreter access has historically been sparse.

The impact of the app is already being felt. In situations where officers previously had to transport individuals to a station to access interpreters, they can now connect from the scene, saving up to 57 minutes per interaction. These time savings compound across the thousands of incidents police respond to daily, returning valuable hours to frontline policing and improving the experience for community members who may already be vulnerable or distressed.

The success of the initiative has generated interest beyond policing. Multicultural NSW is now working with the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service to develop versions of the app that meet their operational needs.

Language+ won the 2025 Premier's Award for excellence in service delivery.

- **Language+ App** – gives access to over 200 pre-translated policing phrases in over 29 languages, available as translated text or pre-recorded in-language audio
- **On-Demand Interpreting Service** – connects officers with NAATI-certified interpreters 24/7 via a dedicated phone line
- **Getting started** – set up and begin using the App with ease using the instructions provided
- **Best practice** – follows operational guidelines to ensure compliance with NSWPF standards and maximising efficiency
- **Troubleshooting** – resolving common issues quickly using the phrases available in-app or accessing an interpreter with ease to bridge the communication gap.

Language+ App



NSWPF Sworn
Officers on
their MobiPOL
devices



A state of belonging: identifying strategic priorities to 2030.

More than 600 community members from across the State signed up for consultations on the development of a new strategic plan for Multicultural NSW that will guide the agency's work through to 2030. The new Multicultural NSW strategic plan will be launched in early 2026.

Multicultural NSW put out a call to its extensive Regional Engagement Program (REP) network and other stakeholders to have their say on the agency's future strategic priorities. The high level of interest and participation in the consultation process is a testament to the community's investment in the work of Multicultural NSW.

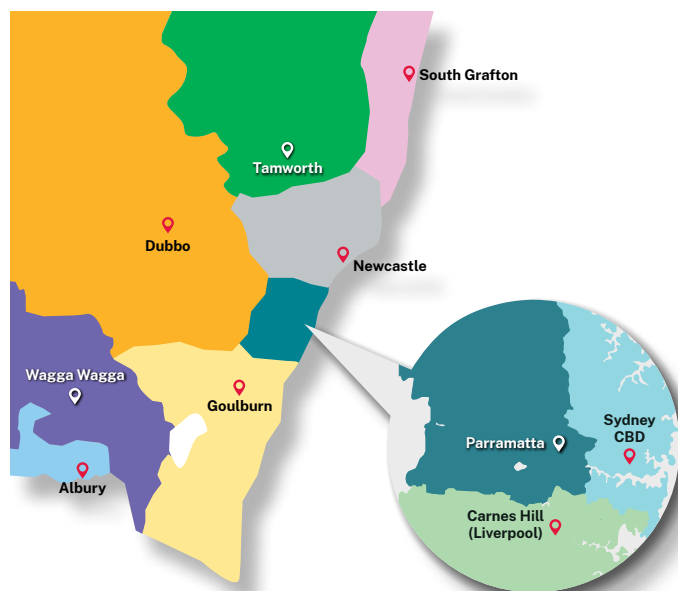
Consultations were held in person in seven regional locations (Goulburn, Grafton, Tamworth, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Albury and Dubbo) and three locations in Sydney (Parramatta, Sydney CBD, Liverpool). Another two consultation sessions were hosted online, and special session was held specifically for young people (aged 18 to 24).

Additional consultations were held with international students, community language school teachers, faith leaders, peak bodies, service providers and local, state and federal government stakeholders. Feedback to inform the new strategic plan could also be submitted by completing an online form or by email.

Key themes that emerged from the consultations and that will inform the strategic direction of Multicultural NSW to 2030 include:

- **A sense of belonging** is fostered when people feel safe and accepted, have the freedom to express their faith, culture and language and can actively participate in community with equal opportunities.
- **Racism and discrimination** remain a key concern with a rise in negative rhetoric about certain communities and many participants reporting on the everyday impact of racism in communities, in workplaces, in schools and online.
- **Language barriers** continue to limit access to essential services, particularly in health, legal, education, and housing systems. There is a need for more interpreters servicing languages spoken by new and emerging communities, especially in regional areas.
- **Employment and skills recognition** is a continuing challenge for migrants. Migrants often work in low-skilled jobs despite being highly qualified. This can be due to discrimination in the recruitment process (such as name bias), overseas qualifications not being recognised or overseas work experience not being valued.

- **Accessibility of services** is varied based on location (such as regional or metropolitan), visa status, and other factors such as culture, gender, age and disability.
- **Funding and capacity building** were key themes, with community members recommending funding be prioritised for smaller grassroots organisations, emerging communities and regional areas. There were also calls for longer-term funding and more accessible grant processes.
- **Social cohesion** is a recurring concern with political rhetoric and international conflicts impacting communities locally. Faith leaders and community organisations spoke about playing a key role in bridging gaps and fostering inclusion. Communities are also seeking opportunities for intercultural dialogue between different cultural groups, and connections with Aboriginal Australian communities.



- **Engaging young people** was raised as a priority by both community leaders and young people themselves. Generational gaps and differences in experiences of multiculturalism create challenges in meaningfully engaging with young people.

Despite the many challenges raised during the consultations, participants were optimistic about the NSW Government's capacity to address them, particularly with the leadership of Multicultural NSW.

Appendix A: NSW Faith Affairs Council - 2025 statement of activities

Report and review of the NSW Faith Affairs Council

This statement of activities is prepared in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the NSW Faith Affairs Council ('the Council'), which require that a short annual statement of activities by the Council will be included in the Community Relations Report, the independent annual report by Multicultural NSW to the NSW Parliament on the state of community relations in NSW.

This statement outlines activities undertaken in accordance with the Council's functions under its Terms of Reference.

Functions of the Council

The Council is established under Section 11 of the Multicultural NSW Act 2000 as a formal consultative mechanism to:

Improve the NSW Government's understanding and competency in relation to policies, programs and services that affect religious communities and people of faith in New South Wales.

Identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration between the NSW Government and religious communities on initiatives that benefit people in New South Wales irrespective of their religious affiliation.

Facilitate the co-ordination of faith-based organisations to support communities during times of need.

Provide advice on the priorities and emerging trends within religious communities.

Propose solutions to support and enhance community wellbeing, community safety, and community harmony across religious differences, including in response to emerging issues or events relating to religious intolerance.

Facilitate ongoing dialogue between the NSW Government, religious communities, and between members.

Consider relevant issues raised by religious communities that are referred to the Council for consideration.

The Council's scope is limited to consultations on current or prospective matters.

Meetings held in 2025

The Council held scheduled quarterly meetings in 2025: on 6 February, 1 May, 31 July and 6 November, with agenda highlights noted below. A member attendance record for scheduled quarterly meetings is included at the end of the statement.

In addition, Council members came together out-of-session on several occasions in response to emerging issues and to foster enhanced collaboration. These activities are referenced below.

Activities undertaken in fulfilment of the Council's functions

1. Improve the NSW Government's understanding and competency in relation to policies, programs and services that affect religious communities and people of faith in New South Wales

In the second year of its operation, 2025, the Council provided a valuable formal mechanism for the NSW Government and its agencies to consult with members on policies, programs, services, prospective legislation and the implementation of legislation that may affect religious communities and people of faith in NSW. The Council:

- provided feedback on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025.
- engaged with Anti-Discrimination NSW on the implementation of the Conversion Practices Ban Act 2024.

- participated in consultations by the NSW Law Reform Commission on the review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977.
- provided input to the review of criminal law protections against the incitement of hatred by the Honourable John Sackar AM KC.
- engaged with Department of Communities and Justice on reviews of Part 3 (Prostitution) of the Summary Offences Act 1988 and the Surrogacy Act 2010.
- worked productively with NSW Department of Education through the Council's Education Working Group on a range of issues including religious intolerance in schools, religious education and voluntary student activities.

2. Identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration between the NSW Government and religious communities on initiatives that benefit people in New South Wales irrespective of their religious affiliation

In 2025, Council members discussed social issues, including housing affordability, that affect people in NSW regardless of their religious affiliation.

The Council participated in a Premier's Department consultation workshop on an LGBTIQ+ inclusion strategy, and provided feedback on the development of a new Multicultural NSW strategic plan.

Council members also participated in a range of NSW Government events, including:

- the NSW Government Lunar New Year celebration in February.
- the Premier's Harmony Dinner in March.
- the NSW Government Iftar Dinner during Ramadan in March.
- the NSW Government Diwali celebration in October.
- the NSW Government Pre-Chanukah event in November.
- the Bondi Public Memorial service in December.

3. Facilitate the co-ordination of faith-based organisations to support communities during times of need

The Council provides an opportunity to better coordinate multi-faith responses to support people and communities in times of need.

Activities in 2025 include:

- the Council discussed the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025 and was invited to meet with Dr Kerry Chant AO PSM, NSW Chief Health Officer, to discuss the two-year legislative review of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022.

- following the Council's advocacy, NSW Health committed to developing resources to support chaplaincy and pastoral care services and will be consulting with the Council as these are developed.
- the Council discussed the need for a multifaith advisory body for the NSW Coroners Court.
- as detailed under function 5 below, the Council played a key role in coordinating multi-faith responses to the Bondi terror attack and emerging issues that impacted community wellbeing, safety and harmony.

4. Provide advice on the priorities and emerging trends within religious communities

Council members completed a strategic priorities survey to identify key priorities and issues that should inform the Council's work in 2026. Key themes identified include monitoring the impact of new legislation, interfaith harmony, youth wellbeing and addressing the impacts of global conflicts on local communities.

5. Propose solutions to support and enhance community wellbeing, community safety, and community harmony across religious differences, including in response to emerging issues or events relating to religious intolerance

2025 was a challenging year and the Council played a key role in coordinating multi-faith responses to emerging issues that impacted community wellbeing, safety and harmony. Responses include:

- statement issued on 21 January in response to attacks on Jewish businesses and properties.
- statement issued on 9 November in response to an antisemitic neo-Nazi rally held outside the NSW Parliament.
- statement issued on 14 December on the night of the terrorist attack at Bondi Beach targeting the Jewish community.
- emergency Council meeting called on 15 December in response to the Bondi terrorist attack.
- launching the Council-endorsed One Mitzvah for Bondi campaign on 19 December, encouraging small acts of kindness and solidarity in honour of the 15 innocent victims killed in the Bondi terrorist attack.
- feedback provided on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025.
- participated in consultations by the NSW Law Reform Commission on the review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977.

- input provided to the review of criminal law protections against the incitement of hatred by the Honourable John Sackar AM KC.
- 12 of the 19 Council members made a submission to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor for the review of the definition of terrorism under the Commonwealth Criminal Code.
- The Council noted the development of a resource for faith leaders in responding to violent attacks on houses of worship developed by Rev. Dr Stephen Robinson of the Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network and agreed to explore opportunities to learn more from the project.
- The Council agreed to participate in an out-of-session workshop to develop an activation plan supporting the role of the Council in responding to future threats to community harmony.

6. Facilitate ongoing dialogue between the NSW Government, religious communities, and between members

The Council has provided a forum for dialogue between the NSW Government, religious communities, and between members. Activities in 2025 include:

- The Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. Steve Kamper MP, addressed the Council's first meeting for the year on 6 February.
- The Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice, Michael Tidball, and the Secretary of the Department of Education, Murat Dizdar PSM, both attended the Council's meeting on 31 July.
- Members have formed new inter-faith relationships and have invited each other to participate in a range of community and faith-based events outside of formal Council business.

7. Consider relevant issues raised by religious communities that are referred to the Council for consideration

In addition to considering issues raised by members on behalf of their religious communities, the Council has received correspondence from faith-based organisations and some non-religious organisations on issues relating to the Council's functions.

8. The Council's scope is limited to consultations on current or prospective matters

The Council has only focused on current or prospective matters.

Members of the NSW Faith Affairs Council 2025

Bishop of Right Rev. Dr Michael Stead, Bishop of South Sydney, Anglican Church of Australia (Chair)

Monica Chahoud, Melkite Charitable Foundation President, Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and all Oceania (Deputy Chair)

Surinder Jain, National Vice President, Hindu Council of Australia

Imam Shadi Alsuleiman, President, Australian National Imams Council (ANIC)

David Ossip, President, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies

Rev. Dr Steve Bartlett, Director of Ministries, Baptist Churches of NSW/ACT

Rev. Ralph Estherby, National Director/CEO for ACC Chaplaincy Australia, Australian Christian Churches

Monica Doumit, Director Public Affairs & Engagement, Catholic Church in Australia, Archdiocese of Sydney

Darren Bark, Co-Chair, Better Balanced Futures

Murray Norman, Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS)

Rev. Heather Topp, Interfaith Minister, Buddhist Council of NSW

Dr Ali Al Samail, Resident Scholar (Sheikh), Australian Ahl Al Bait Islamic Centre

Rev. Dr Manas Ghosh, Religious Minister, Uniting Church in Australia Synod of NSW/ACT

Rev. Bill Crews AM, Superintendent Minister, Ashfield Parish Mission

Rev. Dr Kamal Weerakoon, Religious Minister, Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW

Gawaine Powell Davies, Chairperson, Buddhist Council of NSW

Bishop Christophoros Krikelis, Chancellor, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

Darshan Singh Gill, Patron, Australian Sikh Association

Katherine Xavier, Interfaith Commission Chair, Catholic Diocese of Parramatta

Joseph La Posta, Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW (ex officio)

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