

**Australian Parliament
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Submission no. 356**

City of Ballarat

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To the Committee Secretary

The City of Ballarat is delighted to be able to provide input into the Federal Inquiry on Multiculturalism in Australia through its - Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. A timely opportunity to be in touch with the challenges that our migrant communities face and to put forward recommendations for actions to link with the Government's new policy on multiculturalism and social inclusion agenda.

In addition to the submission, enclosed are a number of Council documents relevant to the inquiry.

- Our Cultural Diversity Strategy 2009-2014
- Our Multicultural Ambassadors 2009-2011
- New Residents Program
- Global Skills for Provincial Victoria (Collateral Materials)

Yours sincerely

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**CITY OF
BALLARAT**



Sustaining growth. Strengthening communities.

Federal Inquiry on Multiculturalism in Australia

**Submission – Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament of Australia**

Contents

Introduction 3

Context..... 3

Issues..... 5

 Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation 5

 Settlement and participation..... 6

 National productive capacity 8

GSPV Participants Home Country 9

Economic modelling 10

Impact summary table 10

Summary of recommendations 11

Introduction

The City of Ballarat welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into multiculturalism in Australia. This submission will highlight four strategic priority areas as a Council response to Federal and Victorian State Policy and as a way forward for supporting cultural diversity. It also provides context to issues and recommendations that have been identified through extensive community consultations.

Context

As one of the nation's fastest growing inland cities, Ballarat's population will surge in the next 25 years. Ballarat is growing faster than the Victorian average. Planning for this expected growth including the consequent impact of cultural diversity is a significant task. The City of Ballarat continues to work in partnership with government, business and the community to plan for this growth.

Ballarat: Today, Tomorrow Together is both a strategic planning framework for, and an expression of, the City of Ballarat's responsibilities in managing growth and governance. The document guides Council in managing and seeking to foster a diverse, vibrant, and growing community that values and enjoys a sense of well-being, culture, heritage, connection, safety and belonging.

In recognition of its emerging cultural diversity, the City of Ballarat aligns its commitment to Australia's Multicultural Policy through the following:

Council adopted its first Cultural Diversity Strategy (CDS) 2009-2014 on 9 September 2009. The aim of the strategy is to sustain the social, economic, cultural, and environmental health and wellbeing of the City's culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse (CALD) communities.

<http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/214447/cultural%20diversity%20strategy%202009-2014.pdf>.

The Strategy was developed through research and an extensive and integrated process of community engagement and is built on four priority areas:

- responsive service delivery;
- leadership and advocacy;
- celebrating and valuing diversity; and
- sustaining an intercultural city.

The Strategy includes 30 Council led actions through a whole of Council approach and includes involvement and partnerships with 29 multicultural associations, service providers, business, government agencies and organisations to meet the diverse and growing needs of the community.

An Intercultural Advisory Committee (IAC) was established by Council and comprises 19 members. The majority of the membership is made up of chairpersons and presidents of various (CALD) associations. The IAC was convened on 15 March 2010 and have met five times to date.

The IAC is currently working to:

- incorporate responsive and culturally appropriate services and programs in future key Council policies;
- support, encourage and welcome new and emerging CALD communities
- participate in networks that facilitate coordinated approaches to education, employment and training;
- coordinate, promote and support community celebrations events and activities to encourage intercultural understanding, appreciation and harmony through community events; and
- support interfaith initiatives within the community to promote harmony and inclusion.

Council has been working in collaboration with the IAC, the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC) and the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee (CHRSPC) on a number of projects and programs that address social inclusion, settlement, education, employment and welfare. Both the IAC and BRMC have been consulted and have identified parallel recommendations that are reflected in this submission.

Issues

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

Since the 1960s, there has been Federal Government approval of migration from a range of countries making Australia one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world. Until about 15 years ago, rural and regional areas were often less diverse than metropolitan areas. Ballarat has become increasingly diverse with between 90 and 130 new migrants arriving to settle each year (Redwood, K.2009 'A Short History of Migration'). Migrant settlement trends suggest that new and emerging communities in Ballarat include Indian, Togolese and Sudanese people.

Of migrants who settle in Ballarat

- 54% are part of the migration stream;
- 30% choose Ballarat to reunite with family; and
- 16% arrive under the humanitarian stream.

Additionally, at any one time, hundreds of international students are studying at local universities and other schools. There has been a need to address the following issues: accommodation, safety, recreation, transportation and the provision of relevant information of services that international students can access. A percentage of these students will become permanent residents following the completion of their educational studies and obtaining the qualifications necessary to fill certain skills gaps in Ballarat.

The City of Ballarat is committed to promoting the values of multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation. Council's leadership and advocacy for old and emerging migrant communities are built on the concept of an 'intercultural' community. Council has provided venues for people to connect and get a true sense of who they are by understanding where they came from, what they can achieve and how they can pass on knowledge to future generations.

This is demonstrated through the following Council resourced and driven initiatives:

- Multicultural Ambassador Program - aimed to enhance community awareness and foster social acceptance of migrants in Ballarat through sharing their stories and implementing community development projects. The program was recognised by the Victorian State Government with a Local Government Award – ‘Victoria’s Multicultural Award for Excellence’
- Harmony Fest 2011 – aimed to publicly champion the benefits of diversity and demonstrate a clear message that the broader community is shared by people of a range of backgrounds and that everyone – despite their race, culture or religion - is accepted. Council has hosted Cultural Diversity Week for the past three years and recently hosted and resourced Harmony Fest 2011 which was an outcome of consultation with the community.
- Global Skills for Provincial Victoria Program – aimed to address workforce skills gaps and needs across Ballarat and beyond through attraction, retention and settlement of skilled migrants.

Settlement and participation

Since the 1960s there has been Federal Government approval of migration from many countries, which identified that Australia is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world. In the last 15 years rural and regional areas were often less diverse than metropolitan areas. Federal policy has sought to increase settlement in regional centres, and has worked with municipalities to achieve this outcome.

This has been achieved through identifying comparative advantages to attract migrants and also ensuring that support services are available and appropriate. Ballarat has been successful in its endeavours to attract new industry and skilled workers from India in its overseas recruitment drive in 2005 as part of Council’s executed Migrant Attraction and Retention Strategy. Council has also supported the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) humanitarian settlement of families from Togo and Sudan through the Ballarat Regional Settlement Pilot Project. As a consequence, the understanding around issues relating to housing and transportation services have significantly improved but have been a prevailing issue to address in Ballarat.

The influx of a diverse mix of migrants to the municipality has also impacted on Council services including: substantial translation, interpreting services and the need for Council

staff to be culturally competent for them to deliver culturally sensitive and appropriate services.

Council continues to play a role in community strengthening and intercultural exchange through the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee (CHRSPC) which includes representatives from federal, state and local government agencies and relevant community agencies. Anecdotically, there has been a shift in community understanding towards intercultural issues rather than the multicultural issues of having a diverse community. This appears to be a slow process but a positive journey with much to be learned by all groups.

For Ballarat the numbers of migrants arriving to settle each year range between 90 and 130. While the greatest numbers are within the skilled migration category, there are also significant numbers of migrants from the family reunion and humanitarian categories. Unaccounted are those who come to Ballarat as secondary migrants. The trends with regard to ethnic and cultural backgrounds have become increasingly diverse showing a decline in migration from the United Kingdom and Europe and increasing numbers of people settling in Ballarat from Asia and Africa.

Council is currently undertaking the following initiatives to enhance settlement and participation of its intercultural communities:

- the use of different modes of consultation on issues relevant to Council's role with CALD members of the community
- the Multicultural Ambassador Program continues to deliver benefits in terms of sharing information about cultural diversity, engaging in conversations with stakeholders and providing role models in relation to leadership
- support for sport and other social activities through the provision of access to Council facilities
- partnerships with the 29 multicultural associations in endeavours that increase capacity through education and intercultural exchange and making opportunities for old existing communities to welcome the new and emerging communities
- the New Residents Program provides every new resident with a booklet to welcome new residents to Ballarat and hosts quarterly receptions at the Town Hall for newcomers to the municipality

- Council demonstrates its respect for different cultures through Citizenship Ceremonies, Australia Day and other occasions when there is a formal acknowledgement of the contribution made by migrants
- Council has resourced the development of a Multicultural Services Directory
- Council has produced the 2011 'All of Us' calendar earmarking important dates observed by multicultural communities
- participation in consultations with DIAC to determine pathways to further assist the settlement of refugees
- provision of grant writing workshops to CALD groups to increase their capacity to apply for Council's Community Development Grants and other grants.

National productive capacity

Ballarat has been hard hit by the global financial crisis, which has caused widespread impacts to the manufacturing sector and hundreds of redundancies. Unemployment is currently around 8 per cent - well above the national average. Given that the availability of jobs is a key attractor for migrants, the structure and cyclical aspects of the labour market need to be understood and the capacity of state and federal assistance obtained to facilitate the settlement of new migrants.

The economic downturn is a cycle and it is important to manage economic and community issues to avoid a stop / start approach to ensure the economic advantages that migration deliver contribute to the economic recovery.

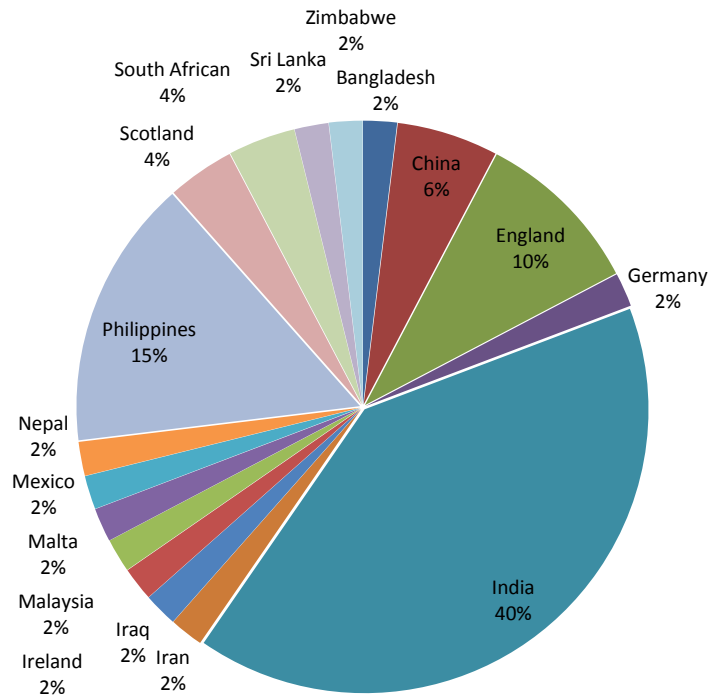
In the last two years the City of Ballarat has been a participant in the Global Skills for Provincial Victoria Program (GSPV) which forms part of the Victorian Government Skilled Migration Policy. The program aims to attract skilled and business migrants to regional areas and assist them in finding employment in areas where there is a local skill shortage.

To date, GSPV has provided employment to 35 skilled migrant participants from September 2009 to March 2011. An additional 17 projected employment outcomes are due by June 2011. While the desired outcomes of the program have so far been met, Council has identified areas of improvement for migrants who arrive under some skilled migrant visas. These gaps include: recognition of overseas qualifications, OHS training, subsidised English classes for specific purposes and settlement assistance for spouses and children of skilled migrants.

The following pie chart outlines the countries of origin of the GSPV outcomes. . The economic impact of the 35 employment outcomes will contribute to Australia’s long term productive capacity.

GSPV participants country of origin

Based on 35 confirmed outcomes and 17 projected outcomes by 30 June 2011



Economic modelling

Based on economic modelling data for the Ballarat region, the following information provides a summary of the economic impact on the Ballarat economy as a result of the nominated 35 employment positions.

Impact summary table

Impact summary	Direct effect	Industrial effect	Consumption effect	Total effect
Output (\$M)	\$12.177	\$5.139	\$3.977	\$21.292
Employment (Jobs)	35	13	18	66
Wages and Salaries (\$M)	\$3.045	\$1.179	\$1.128	\$5.352
Value-added (\$M)	\$4.556	\$2.057	\$1.841	\$8.453

- From the direct expansion in the economy due to these 35 jobs, flow-on industrial effects in terms of local purchases of goods and services are anticipated, and it is estimated that these indirect impacts would result in the gain of a further 13 jobs. This represents a Type 1 employment multiplier of 1.371.
- The increase in direct and indirect output and the corresponding creation of jobs in the economy are expected to result in an increase in the wages and salaries paid to employees. A proportion of these wages and salaries are typically spent on consumption and a proportion of this expenditure is captured in the local economy. The consumption effects under this scenario are estimated to further boost employment by 18 jobs.
- Total employment, including all direct, industrial and consumption effects is estimated to increase by up to 66 jobs. This represents a Type 2 employment multiplier of 1.886.

Currently, the City of Ballarat has played a proactive role in embracing and encouraging an inclusive, harmonious, intercultural community that welcomes diversity and people from all walks of life. There are further opportunities to ensure sustained growth and to

strengthen its migrant communities both now and into the future but it is constrained by the increasing demands on required services.

Summary of recommendations

The City of Ballarat wishes to offer the following recommendations for action:

- provision of additional funding for Council to access interpretation and translation services since language is identified as a key issue by migrants across the board for them to access appropriate services
- further support for initiatives to promote cultural competence such as cultural diversity training for Council staff which will ensure an awareness and provision of culturally sensitive / appropriate service delivery
- provision of additional funding for built form and public space in consideration of the different ways in which cultural groups utilise public space. An example may be bringing people of similar backgrounds together to 'cultural precincts' which was found to counteract isolation
- support and provision of opportunities to enhance the experience of international students through participation, creation of support services and networks
- funding assistance for Harmony Day / Cultural Diversity Week celebrations in order to extend the participation to more CALD groups
- support an intercultural approach to contribute to the revitalisation of business opportunities by harnessing internationally connected business and innovation opportunities
- sustain the Skilled Migration Program - Global Skills for Provincial Victoria Program and to include necessary funding for settlement initiatives for skilled migrants and their families
- facilitate the recognition of overseas qualifications to address under-employment and unemployment of migrants
- provision of government assistance to CALD groups and peak bodies in education / training and development needs of migrants such as acquainting them with Australian culture / systems and to prepare them for employment
- provision of social support programs for the delivery of culturally appropriate and sensitive services for CALD elderly, women, men, spouses and children
- provision of programs targeted for migrant women to counter isolation and promote independence.
- access to mental health for example counselling programs for traumatised refugees / migrants.