CITY OF BALLARAT

INTERCULTURAL PLAN 2027–2031

Engagement Summary

Proudly working with and for our community



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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

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Engagement Summary

Executive Summary

Between 15 June and 26 July 2026, the City of Ballarat undertook extensive consultation with community members, organisations and stakeholders to inform the development of the 2027-2031 Intercultural Plan.

The consultation commenced during Refugee Week and included a range of engagement opportunities across the municipality.

A total of 374 community members, organisations, advisory groups, City of Ballarat staff and key stakeholders shared their experiences, aspirations and priorities for strengthening Ballarat as an inclusive and intercultural city. Feedback was gathered through online surveys, community conversations, workshops, targeted engagement activities and stakeholder submissions.

Overall, consultation participants expressed strong support for the City of Ballarat's ongoing commitment to intercultural inclusion and endorsed the four priority areas established in the previous 2022-2026 Intercultural Plan: Responsive Services, Active Citizenship, Leadership and Advocacy, and Maximising and Valuing Diversity.

Participants recognised Ballarat's growing cultural diversity and acknowledged the positive role the City has played in supporting multicultural communities, facilitating cultural celebrations, strengthening partnerships and establishing Ballarat as Australia's first Intercultural City.

At the same time, respondents identified opportunities to broaden the approach beyond service provision and cultural celebrations towards fostering belonging, intercultural connection, participation, influence and practical inclusion in everyday life. While many participants described Ballarat as an increasingly welcoming and diverse community, consultation highlighted that racism, discrimination, social isolation and barriers to participation continue to affect the experiences of culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse residents.

The consultation highlighted a strong desire for accessible and culturally responsive services, meaningful opportunities for intercultural connection, stronger action to address racism, greater community influence in decision-making and stronger support for multicultural organisations and leaders.

Participants consistently emphasised that intercultural inclusion is not simply about celebrating diversity but about creating a city where all people can access opportunities, contribute their skills, build relationships, influence decisions and experience a genuine sense of belonging.

The findings provide a strong evidence base for the development of the 2027-2031 Intercultural Plan and suggest an evolution in focus, from supporting access and participation to fostering an intercultural Ballarat where people feel connected, valued, empowered and able to contribute fully to community life.

> "The community message was clear: Ballarat has made positive progress in celebrating diversity and supporting inclusion, and people want to build on this through continued efforts to address racism, remove barriers and strengthen a sense of belonging."

Emerging Key Themes

Six key themes emerged from the Intercultural Plan consultation:



Theme 1:
Accessible Information and Services

Participants identified the need for clearer, more accessible and culturally responsive information about City of Ballarat services, programs and opportunities. Many respondents noted that services often exist, but barriers including language, transport, digital access and unfamiliarity with government systems can make them difficult to find, understand and access.

> "Many good services exist, but newcomers often don't know about them or aren't accustomed to using them - welcome packs should clearly list available services."
>
> Local Multicultural Community Group

The gap is not always services existing, but people knowing about them, finding them and understanding how to access them.

Participants called for multilingual information, stronger promotion, community outreach, trusted community leaders sharing information, and a coordinated "no wrong door" approach across City of Ballarat services.

> "People continue to experience barriers created by language, unfamiliarity with Australian systems, and services that are not always culturally responsive or easy to navigate."
>
> Local Multicultural Community Group



Theme 2:
Belonging and Community Connection

A consistent message throughout the consultation was that inclusion extends beyond accessing services. Participants described belonging, connection and feeling at home as essential outcomes of the next Plan.

Feedback highlighted the importance of helping new residents settle, reducing social isolation, supporting emerging communities and creating opportunities for people from different backgrounds to build relationships and participate in community life.

> "Inclusion beyond cultural events - multicultural events tend to attract mainly multicultural attendees, limiting broader impact. ... stronger pathways into local employment, boards, and leadership roles are needed so their contributions are valued economically and civically - not just culturally."
>
> Local Multicultural Community Group

Participants supported more community spaces, neighbourhood activities, social initiatives and opportunities for meaningful participation across all stages of life.

> "Belonging cannot be created through events alone."
>
> Respondent



Theme 3:
Strengthening Intercultural Connection and Understanding

Respondents expressed strong support for interculturalism as more than multiple cultures existing side by side. Participants wanted greater opportunities for cultural exchange, shared experiences, learning and mutual understanding.

There was significant support for initiatives that bring people together through arts, food, storytelling, education, libraries, schools, community hubs and public events.

Participants described an intercultural Ballarat as a city where diversity is visible, relationships are built across cultures and everyone shares a sense of belonging.

> "Consider the development of more compassionate spaces that bring people together in ways that allow them to meet as humans first and then to celebrate diversity."
>
> Local Multicultural Community Group



Theme 4:
Addressing Racism and Building Cultural Safety

Racism, discrimination, exclusion and anti-faith behaviour were identified as major barriers to participation and belonging. Nearly half of survey respondents reported experiencing or witnessing unfair treatment, exclusion or discrimination in the previous 12 months.

Participants called for stronger prevention and education initiatives including:

- Anti-racism education
- Active bystander training
- Cultural competency programs
- School-based initiatives
- Community storytelling projects
- Youth-led programs
- Stronger reporting and response pathways

Many respondents emphasised that addressing racism should be embedded across the entire Plan rather than being treated as a standalone activity.



Theme 5:
Participation, Leadership and Community Influence

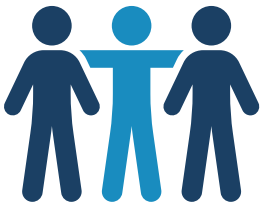
Participants consistently stated that genuine participation should involve influence, leadership and decision-making opportunities.

Respondents supported:

- Greater representation on advisory committees
- Community co-design processes
- Leadership pathways for emerging communities
- Youth leadership initiatives
- Intercultural ambassador programs
- Ongoing engagement rather than one-off consultation

There was strong support for ensuring multicultural communities are represented in the spaces where priorities, policies, programs and budgets are determined.

> "Diverse voices should be present in the rooms where priorities, budgets, policies and programs are decided."
>
> Respondent



Theme 6:
Supporting Community Organisations and Valuing Cultural Contributions

Community organisations were recognised as critical infrastructure for settlement, connection, participation and leadership.

Participants acknowledged the important role cultural associations, faith groups and community organisations play in supporting individuals and building social cohesion. However, many organisations reported challenges related to funding, venue costs, governance requirements, volunteer capacity and sustainability.

Respondents called for:

- Stronger partnerships between Council and community organisations
- Affordable or subsidised community spaces
- Capacity-building support
- Simplified grants processes

Increased visibility and promotion of community organisations.

Engagement Summary

There were several opportunities for community participation, including through the City of Ballarat's online MySay platform:

76
responses
via MySay online survey

14
submissions
via group and organisation survey

132
responses
via MySay Four Quick Questions

34
responses
via MySay One Quick Questions

16
responses
via printed postcard (10) and social media feedback (6)

Who We Heard From

The consultation engaged **374 people** through a combination of online engagement and targeted consultation activities.

Community survey respondents represented a diverse cross-section of the community:

54
identified
as being from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

17
identified
as experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage

11
responses
as having a disability or chronic health condition

7
responses
as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

respondents ranged in age
from young people through to older adults

The consultation also included input from multicultural community organisations, faith groups, youth organisations, service providers, City of Ballarat staff and advisory committees.

Engagement Methods



Targeted Engagement

City of Ballarat staff facilitated community conversations, focus groups and workshops with the following:

- City of Ballarat Intercultural Advisory Committee
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Youth Services participants
- Key intercultural stakeholders
- Community consultation sessions at Town Hall
- City of Ballarat staff

More than **100 people** participated in targeted engagement activities, generating extensive feedback regarding settlement, inclusion, racism, leadership and belonging.



Additional Engagement Methods

Consultation was promoted through:

- City of Ballarat MySay webpage
- Social media channels
- Community organisations and leaders
- Advisory groups and partner agencies
- Community events
- Stakeholder networks
- Printed materials and postcards

What we heard

What's Working Well

Participants recognised significant achievements under the 2022-2026 Intercultural Plan, including:

- Strong leadership and commitment to inclusion
- Growth of multicultural communities and organisations
- Harmony Fest, Refugee Week and cultural celebrations
- Strong partnerships with multicultural organisations
- Increased visibility of cultural diversity
- Support provided through the Intercultural Advisory Committee
- Growing awareness of Ballarat's intercultural identity

Many respondents described Ballarat as an increasingly welcoming and culturally diverse city that values multiculturalism and cultural exchange.

Areas for Improvement

The strongest areas identified for improvement included:

- Accessibility of information and services
- Community connection and belonging
- Racism prevention and cultural safety
- Support for emerging communities
- Community participation and influence
- Access to affordable community spaces
- Youth engagement and leadership
- Better communication and multilingual information
- Stronger support for multicultural organisations

Respondents consistently requested a stronger focus on practical inclusion and measurable community outcomes rather than activities alone.

Organisation and Community Group Feedback

Organisation submissions reinforced many of the themes raised by community members.
Key priorities included:

- Stronger partnerships between the City of Ballarat and multicultural organisations
- Greater support for community capacity building
- Increased representation and leadership opportunities
- Addressing racism and discrimination
- Building intercultural understanding
- Improving access to services and information

Organisations recognised the City of Ballarat's commitment while encouraging a greater focus on co-design, influence and long-term sustainability.

In Conclusion

The consultation demonstrates strong support for the City of Ballarat's continued commitment to intercultural inclusion and recognises the important foundations established through the current Intercultural Plan. Participants acknowledged Council's leadership, growing cultural diversity across the municipality and Ballarat's reputation as an intercultural city.

At the same time, consultation findings indicate that the next Plan should move beyond service access and cultural celebration to place greater emphasis on belonging, intercultural connection, anti-racism, participation, leadership and community influence.

The findings suggest that the next phase of work should focus on creating the conditions that allow people from all cultural backgrounds to access opportunities, develop connections, contribute their skills and experience a genuine sense of belonging. Through strong partnerships, community leadership and practical inclusion, the City of Ballarat can continue building an intercultural city where cultural diversity is visible, valued and contributes to a thriving, connected and welcoming community.

Closing the Loop and What's Next

Community feedback from this engagement will be used to develop the draft Intercultural Plan 2027-2031. The draft Plan will be released during Phase 2 engagement, allowing community members to review the proposed actions and provide further feedback before the Plan is finalised.

The consultation findings provide a strong foundation for the next Intercultural Plan and will help ensure Council's future priorities reflect the voices, experiences and aspirations of Ballarat's culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities.

> "Ultimately, the success of the next Intercultural Plan will be measured not only by the activities delivered, but by whether culturally diverse residents feel they belong, are heard, have equitable access to opportunities and services, and are able to participate fully in the social, economic and civic life of Ballarat."
>
> Local Multicultural Community Group

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