

Cultural diversity plan 2007-08

Department of Human Services



Cultural diversity plan 2007–08

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A message from the Human Services Ministers

Regardless of country of birth, language or culture, all Victorians are entitled to the same access to high-quality health, community and housing services.

The Victorian Government has a strong history of celebrating and promoting cultural diversity and multiculturalism, backed up by policy and legislation. This includes the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (amended in 2006), *Growing Victoria Together, Valuing cultural diversity*, the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2004*, *A Fairer Victoria* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

According to the 2006 Census, one in five Victorians speaks a language other than English at home. Nearly one-quarter of the Victorian population was born overseas, with more than 850,000 Victorians born in countries where English was not the main language spoken.

Our diversity contributes to the social, cultural and economic strength of the State. Despite this, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds can also face discrimination and disadvantage. To address these issues, the government committed itself in *A Fairer Victoria* (2006) to develop cultural diversity plans for every department to ensure services are culturally sensitive.

The Department of Human Services *Cultural diversity plan 2007–08* outlines a range of practical initiatives to understand and respond to changing demands in the human services sectors, ensure cultural diversity is considered in the design and delivery of services, and create greater opportunities for individuals, families and communities from CALD backgrounds to participate in Victorian society.

A key initiative in this plan is the establishment of new ways to support engagement between the portfolios and the CALD sector, leading to better outcomes for clients and communities. We will hold an annual Department of Human Services Forum on Cultural Diversity open to a wide range of voices, designed to both build on the successes of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (MACCALD) and ensure we are not duplicating the role of the Victorian Multicultural Commission Advisory Council. As Ministers, each of us will establish small expert working groups around particular issues to ensure we work closely with and learn from the knowledge and experience of CALD stakeholders.

The initiatives in the plan reflect our commitment to all members of the Victorian community and to continually improve the capacity of our human services system to meet diverse needs.



Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Minister for Health



Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Senior Victorians
Minister for Community Services



Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Housing

Secretary's foreword

Cultural diversity is an intrinsic part of Victoria – in the Department of Human Services we celebrate and recognise this in policy, program development and service delivery and in the way we recruit and support the human services workforce.

This *Cultural diversity plan*, the first the department has produced, outlines a range of initiatives the department will implement this year to improve our responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity. We are proud of our solid work over many years to improve the quality and appropriateness of our services for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians, and this plan builds on our achievements while committing all parts of the department to an ongoing process of engagement, learning and improvement.

Developed as part of a whole-of-government initiative in *A Fairer Victoria* (2006), the department's *Cultural diversity plan* works within the framework of our *Departmental plan* to ensure that responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity is recognised as an essential part of our core business. For example, recognising the differential impacts that population ageing is having on various communities, depending on their patterns of immigration, is central to the work of our Aged Care Branch.

The plan's highlights include:

- improving systems for the department to understand and review the effectiveness of service delivery to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Victorians
- working with health services to improve patient outcomes by assisting unaccredited workers currently working as health interpreters in rare and emerging languages to improve their interpreting skills and knowledge of human services
- funding the Victorian Refugee Health Network to build capacity of the human services system to provide more accessible and appropriate services for people from a refugee background, with a particular emphasis on supporting service providers in rural and regional Victoria
- developing and funding a number of pilot projects under the *Future directions in culturally appropriate access to Home and Community Care (HACC) program core services*, to assist ethno-specific and multicultural agencies to explore and develop mechanisms to assist people from CALD backgrounds to access HACC services
- targeted health promotion activity focusing on CALD Victorians, to complement successful mainstream campaigns
- the establishment of an annual Department of Human Services Cultural Diversity Forum.

Responsiveness to cultural diversity is everyone's business in the department, and I look forward to the outcomes of the initiatives outlined in this plan.



Fran Thorn
Secretary

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1. Introduction

Department of Human Services mission

Protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of all Victorians emphasising vulnerable groups and those most in need.

The Department of Human Services is Victoria's largest state government department. It directly employs more than 11,500 people and funds organisations such as hospitals, aged care facilities, ambulance services and community service agencies that collectively employ more than 80,000 people. It also works in partnership with local governments and non-government organisations to help provide human services across Victoria.

Although specifics may differ across the department, core to the way the department works with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Victorians is through building partnerships between culturally responsive mainstream agencies, including local governments, and the specialised knowledge and connectedness of ethno-specific and multicultural agencies.

Consistent with the whole-of-government commitment outlined in *A Fairer Victoria* (2006), the department's *Cultural diversity plan* supports existing work and strengthens activities to improve the health and wellbeing of CALD Victorians.

The plan follows the *Departmental plan 2007–08* framework and identifies initiatives against the six key departmental objectives:

1. building sustainable, well-managed and efficient human services
2. providing timely and accessible human services
3. improving human service safety and quality
4. promoting least intrusive and earliest effective care
5. strengthening the capacity of individuals, families and communities
6. reducing inequalities through improving health and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged people and communities.

Consultation and reporting process

The department consulted with key stakeholders in developing the *Cultural diversity plan 2007–08* and will continue to engage widely in relation to future iterations.

In addition the department will refresh the mechanisms we use to support engagement between the Ministerial portfolios and the CALD sector, leading to better outcomes for clients and communities. A wide ranging annual Department of Human Services forum on Cultural Diversity will be held, complemented by a small number of expert working groups reporting to individual Ministers to provide advice on key issues for the department. These mechanisms will be used to support progress against each year's plan, exchange knowledge and perspectives and promote best practice in culturally responsive and accessible human services delivery.

The department will report on progress of successive *Cultural diversity plans* through the annual *Victorian Government achievements in multicultural affairs* report.

The Department of Human Services Cultural diversity plan 2007–08 at a glance

<p>Policy context</p> <p><i>Growing Victoria Together</i></p> <p><i>Valuing cultural diversity</i></p> <p><i>Multicultural Victoria Act 2004</i></p> <p><i>A Fairer Victoria</i></p> <p><i>Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001</i></p> <p><i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i></p>	
<p>Goal</p> <p>The Department of Human Services <i>Cultural diversity plan 2007–08</i> aims to shape practice within the department to ensure human services delivery is culturally responsive and accessible for all Victorians.</p>	
<p>Policy mandate</p> <p><i>A Fairer Victoria</i> (2006) requires all government departments to have cultural diversity plans that address provision for culturally sensitive service delivery to Victoria’s communities.</p>	
<p>Departmental objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building sustainable, well-managed and efficient human services • providing timely and accessible human services • improving human service safety and quality • promoting least intrusive and earliest effective care • strengthening the capacity of individuals, families and communities • reducing inequalities through improving health and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged people and communities. 	<p>Culturally responsive and accessible human service delivery</p> <p>The department’s <i>Cultural diversity plan</i> builds on the extensive experience and solid work the department has already undertaken to improve the quality and appropriateness of its services for CALD Victorians.</p> <p>Key new initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving systems for the department to understand and review the effectiveness of service delivery to CALD Victorians • working with health services to improve patient outcomes by providing an opportunity for unaccredited workers currently working as health interpreters in rare and emerging languages to improve their interpreting skills and knowledge of human services • funding the Victorian Refugee Health Network to build capacity of the human services system to provide more accessible and appropriate services for people from a refugee background, with a particular emphasis on supporting service providers in rural and regional Victoria • developing and funding a number of pilot projects under the <i>Future directions in culturally appropriate access to HACC program core services</i>, to assist ethno-specific and multicultural agencies to explore and develop mechanisms to assist people from CALD backgrounds to access HACC services • targeted health promotion activity focusing on CALD Victorians, to complement successful mainstream campaigns • the establishment of an annual Department of Human Services Cultural Diversity Forum.
<p>Consultation and forward planning</p> <p>The department consulted with key stakeholders in developing the <i>Cultural diversity plan 2007–08</i> and will continue to engage widely for future iterations.</p> <p>We will build on the success of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (MACCALD), which completed its second term in 2006, with a broad ranging annual Department of Human Services Forum on Cultural Diversity. A small number of expert working groups reporting to individual Ministers will focus on key issues for the department. These mechanisms will be used to support progress against each year’s plan and promote continuous improvement across the department. The department and mainstream, ethno-specific and multicultural agencies will undertake this work as partners.</p>	
<p>Reporting</p> <p>The department will report on progress of successive <i>Cultural diversity plans</i> through the annual <i>Victorian Government achievements in multicultural affairs</i> report.</p>	

2. Diversity

This plan has been developed to promote consideration of cultural and linguistic diversity in the health, community, aged care, mental health, disability, alcohol and other drug, youth and housing services sectors. It recognises that the Victorian population is highly diverse across dimensions such as disability, gender, Indigeneity, faith, cultural and linguistic diversity, age and sexual orientation. There is diversity within various population groups and the issues facing groups and individuals can change over time.

Victoria has a proud history of promoting multiculturalism, with a strong recognition of the social, cultural and economic benefits of diversity. At the same time, discrimination and social exclusion are still experienced at higher rates by particular population groups, resulting in and compounding disadvantage. A recent VicHealth survey of more than 4,000 Victorians into the effects of discrimination on Victoria's migrant and refugee communities found that significant numbers of Victorians from CALD backgrounds experience discrimination and intolerance¹. Furthermore, this work shows that refugees and migrants have better health and wellbeing outcomes if they are supported to adjust to a new culture and access the resources and systems of their new country, and to maintain aspects of their cultural identity and connections to their communities and institutions. This support means that addressing cultural and linguistic diversity requires two complementary approaches:

- supporting and promoting diversity
- reducing discrimination and disadvantage.

Cultural diversity in Victoria

According to the 2006 Australian Census:

- 24 per cent of Victorians were born overseas, just under three-quarters of whom were born in countries where English was not the main language spoken
- 44 per cent of Victorians have at least one parent born overseas
- 20 per cent of Victorians speak a language other than English at home, with over 200 languages and dialects spoken
- Victorians observe 130 religions and faiths.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, ABS, Canberra, 2006.

¹VicHealth, *More than tolerance: embracing diversity for health: Discrimination affecting migrant and refugee communities in Victoria, its health consequences, community attitudes and solutions – A summary report*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, 2007.

3. Health and wellbeing issues for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians

There have been many waves of migration in Victoria's history. Many migrants have come to Victoria to escape oppression and persecution; others have come to improve their prosperity. As a result, health and wellbeing issues for CALD Victorians differ depending on factors including gender, age, cultural background, health and wellbeing prior to their arrival to Australia, settlement experiences, family reunification and length of time settled in Victoria.

The interplay between culture and health is significant for CALD Victorians. People from CALD backgrounds may practise specific cultural traditions at particular life stages: childbirth, raising children and young people, death and dying. It is at these life stages that people come into contact with human services system. Sometimes these traditions are successfully recognised through mainstream practice but at other times they may be in conflict. Furthermore the interplay between culture and health may continue for subsequent generations and can result in intergenerational conflict. Research also clearly shows the ill-health effects of discrimination and social exclusion.

People from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds have particular health and wellbeing needs. Many have come from some of the world's poorest countries, had protracted stays in refugee camps and have witnessed or survived violence on a mass scale. Research tells us that people from refugee backgrounds suffer a higher incidence of physical and mental health problems than other migrants and people born in Australia.

Furthermore, refugees:

- are less likely than other migrants to have family and community support in Australia to assist them in accessing health care. Differences between the health systems of the refugee's country of origin and Victoria can also have implications for health service providers and for the delivery of services to refugee clients
- often have lower levels of literacy in their first language and lower levels of English proficiency – a situation compounded by the limited number of qualified interpreters speaking new and emerging languages
- often face greater difficulties in finding housing and employment.²

The Department of Human Services has responded to the health and wellbeing needs of refugees by implementing the department's *Refugee health and wellbeing action plan 2005–08*. A new Action plan will be developed in 2008 to guide service provision to 2010.

There are also particular health and wellbeing issues resulting from the age profile of CALD Victorians. Future ageing patterns reflect peaks in migration, and for communities where migration to Australia peaked in the post-war period through to the early 1970s, ageing within these communities is now occurring at a faster rate than that within Victoria generally.³ Additionally it is recognised that as people age, it is not unusual to lose proficiency in speaking a second language. As a result older people with conditions affecting memory tend to revert to speaking their first language.⁴ Compounding this situation is a decreasing supply of interpreters in languages such as Greek and Italian. This is an issue currently being addressed by the interpreter industry.

² Department of Human Services, *Refugee health and wellbeing action plan 2005–08*, Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2005.

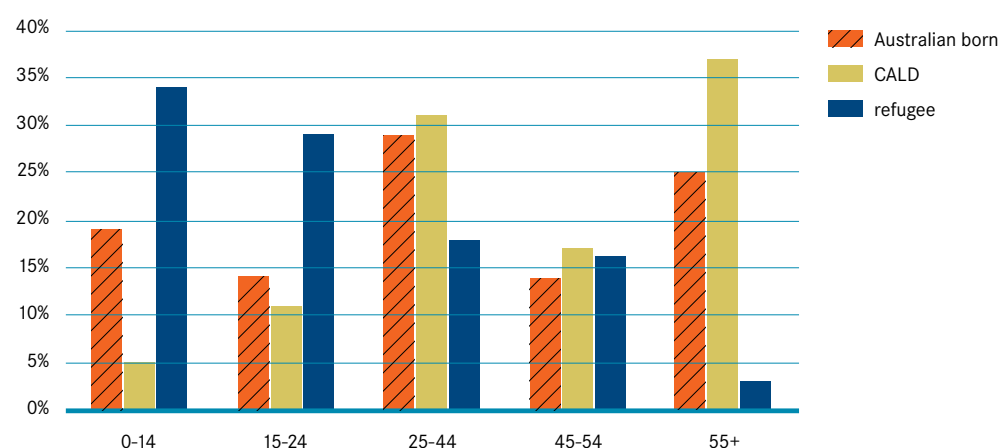
³ Howe, AL, *Cultural diversity, ageing and HACC: trends in Victoria in the next 15 years*, Department of Human Services, Victoria, March 2006.

⁴ *Ibid*

Figure 1 shows that CALD Victorians are ageing faster than the Victorian population. Victorians are not only living longer but maintaining their good health for more years. Some CALD seniors are well linked with their community, however for others there is risk of isolation. This can be caused by limited fluency in English, changed role, a decreasing sense of value in the wider community and/or being separated from families overseas.⁵ Access to human services will be more difficult for those CALD seniors who are already isolated. Planning for this kind of demographic change is vital to ensure human services delivery remains accessible and culturally responsive, particularly for older CALD Victorians.

Although the current refugee population is relatively young in comparison, these populations may bring their older relatives to Victoria through the Commonwealth government's family migration program.⁶ While successful family reunification can be a positive experience for all members of the family, older relatives may also experience social isolation, 'culture shock', be unable to speak the language of their new country and lose independence.⁷

Figure 1. Age profiles across different population groups



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing, ABS, Canberra 2006*
Department of Immigration and Citizenship Settlement Database, November 2007

Note: Refugee population data is taken from the Commonwealth Humanitarian Program Stream for arrivals to Victoria between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2007. CALD population data does not include people born in predominantly English speaking countries of Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America or people whose country of birth was not stated. The Census lists 24 countries of birth other than Australia. However 4 per cent of Census respondents were born in countries, mainly smaller nations, not listed by the Census. This category 'born elsewhere' has been included in the CALD population group.

⁵ Department of Treasury and Finance, *Preparing for Victoria's Future: Challenges and opportunities in an ageing population*, Department of Treasury and Finance, Victoria, November 2004.

⁶ Refugee Health Research Centre, *A Profile of Victorian seniors from refugee backgrounds: Health and wellbeing needs and access to aged care health and support services*, Refugee Health Research Centre, Victoria, 2005.

⁷ *Ibid*

Government economic, social and health policy context

Growing Victoria Together (2001, refreshed 2005)
 Victorian Government's policy statement and vision for the next ten years outlined through ten shared goals.

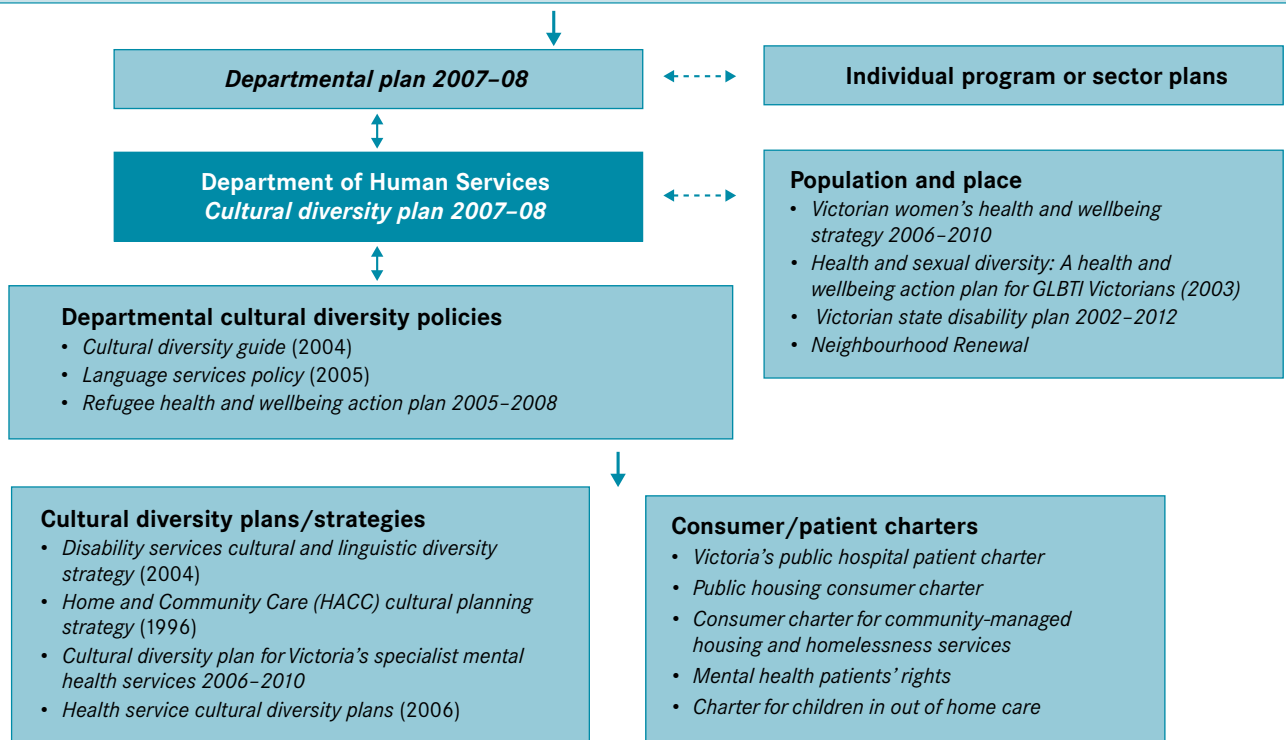
Valuing cultural diversity (2002)
 Whole-of-government policy statement outlining four guiding principles for promoting cultural diversity.

Multicultural Victoria Act 2004
 The *Multicultural Victoria Act* outlines the government's principles of multiculturalism and established annual reporting requirements for Victorian Government departments in relation to multiculturalism.

A Fairer Victoria (2005)
 Victoria's long-term social policy action describes its plan to tackle disadvantage and create opportunity for all Victorians. *A Fairer Victoria – progress and next steps* was released in 2006, requiring all departments to compile cultural diversity plans that address provision for culturally sensitive service delivery to Victoria's communities.

Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (amended 2006)
 The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act prohibits racial and religious vilification.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
 The Charter sets out freedoms, rights and responsibilities for all people in Victoria.



Doing it with us, not for us (2006-2009)

Individual services plans

4. Victorian Government policy context

The following policies and Acts of Parliament provide the context for departmental strategies to address cultural diversity.

Growing Victoria Together

In 2001, the Victorian Government released *Growing Victoria Together*, a long-term vision for the next ten years. Refreshed in March 2005 it identifies ten goals. Two of these are high quality accessible health and community services and a fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity.

To find out more about *Growing Victoria Together* visit www.dpc.vic.gov.au

Valuing cultural diversity

The former Victorian Office for Multicultural Affairs introduced the *Valuing cultural diversity* policy statement in 2002. A predecessor to the *Multicultural Victoria Act* (see below), the statement outlines four guiding principles for promoting cultural diversity. These are *valuing diversity*, *reducing inequality*, *encouraging participation* and *promoting the social, cultural and economic benefits of cultural diversity for all Victorians*.

To find out more about *Valuing cultural diversity* visit www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

Multicultural Victoria Act 2004

The *Multicultural Victoria Act* outlines the Government's principles of multiculturalism and established annual reporting requirements for Victorian Government departments in relation to multiculturalism. The reporting requirements include use of language services, communications in languages other than English, initiatives that promote multiculturalism and meet the needs of Victoria's CALD communities and the extent to which CALD Victorians are represented on statutory boards and committees.

The *Victorian Government achievements in multicultural affairs* report, to which the department contributes, is published each year.

For more information about the latest *Victorian Government achievements in multicultural affairs* visit www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

A Fairer Victoria

A Fairer Victoria was launched in May 2005 as the Victorian Government's long-term social policy action statement and describes its plan to tackle disadvantage and create opportunity for all Victorians.

For more information about *A Fairer Victoria* visit www.dpc.vic.gov.au

A Fairer Victoria – progress and next steps (June 2006) included a focus on strengthening our multicultural communities, and required departments to have cultural diversity plans that address provision for culturally sensitive service delivery to Victoria's communities. As a result, departments are required to:

- incorporate culturally appropriate training for their staff into the delivery of services to their CALD communities
- ensure that information on services is readily accessible to CALD Victorians
- include assessment of the effectiveness of service delivery to CALD Victorians as an integral part of program evaluation.

A Fairer Victoria: building on our commitment (May 2007) continues investments in areas that have a direct impact on disadvantage. The core element of this framework is the combined emphasis on universal services for all Victorians and targeted support for those in greatest need.

The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

The *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act* prohibits racial and religious vilification. It provides a mechanism for victims to have their complaints heard and to seek redress. The Act was amended in June 2006 following consultation with the multifaith community. The amendments provide greater clarity around proselytising (converting) and reduce the risk of costly legal proceedings for misconceived complaints.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* sets out freedoms, rights and responsibilities for all people in Victoria. The charter focuses on civil and political rights, and includes the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief and cultural rights.

5. Department of Human Services framework for addressing cultural diversity

The delivery of culturally responsive, equitable services is already a core quality expectation of department programs and funded agencies, underpinned by key government legislation, program standards and guidelines. In addition, three key department documents support the human services sector to achieve this aim. These are:

- *Cultural diversity guide* (2004)
- *Language services policy* (2005)
- *Refugee health and wellbeing action plan 2005–08*.

For more information visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural

Some program areas within the department already have cultural diversity plans or strategies, which will continue to provide a framework for action in specific sectors or services. These include:

- Disability Services *Cultural and linguistic diversity strategy*
- Home and Community Care (HACC) *Cultural planning strategy*
- *The cultural diversity plan for Victoria's specialist mental health services*
- *Health service cultural diversity plans*.

In addition some areas of the department have consumer or patient charters that outline individual rights and responsibilities. Almost all of the charters include respect for culture or cultural background. In some cases, they specify that an interpreter will be provided if required or that information must be explained in a language or manner that can be understood. Examples of the charters include:

- *Victoria's public hospital patient charter*
- *Public housing consumer charter*
- *Consumer charter for community-managed housing and homelessness services*
- *Mental health patients' rights booklets*
- *Charter for children in out of home care*.

Doing it with us not for us (2006–2009) provides a framework to support consumer, carer and community participation in improving care and treatment, service planning and health and wellbeing policy development. The policy specifically recognises the need to respond to the diversity of our community including CALD Victorians.

There are also a number of advisory mechanisms for Ministers and program areas on issues related to cultural diversity and human services. The Ministerial Advisory Council on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (MACCALD) completed its second term in 2006. In its place, the Department will establish a broad ranging annual Forum on Cultural Diversity. This will be complemented by a small number of expert working groups reporting to individual Ministers which will focus on key issues for the department. These mechanisms will be used to support progress against each year's plan and promote continuous improvement across the department. The department and mainstream, ethno-specific and multicultural agencies will undertake this work as partners.

The department influences the way in which programs and services meet the needs of CALD Victorians. This ranges from policy frameworks that shape service delivery, for example the *Disability services cultural and linguistic diversity strategy*, to utilising quality tools such as the *Service excellence framework*. The department also funds key organisations to strengthen the capacity of the human services system to support the needs of CALD Victorians, for example the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health.

Through these mechanisms and the strong partnerships within the department and between various sectors, the department seeks to ensure that both universal and targeted services and programs are accessible, responsive and appropriate.

Role of the department's regions

The department delivers services through eight geographical regions. There are three metropolitan regions: Eastern, North and West, and Southern; and five rural regions: Barwon South Western, Gippsland, Grampians, Hume and Loddon Mallee.

The regional offices are responsible for planning, funding and delivering health, housing and community services. They also develop strong partnerships with health and community agencies and collaboratively plan local services to ensure the Victorian community receives high-quality services. Most of the department's clients will receive services directly from regional staff or regionally funded agencies, and most funded health, housing and community services will work with the department's regional staff. It is vital that the department's regional staff and funded agencies have the skills and resources to build upon and improve access to services for Victoria's CALD communities.

6. The Department of Human Services Cultural diversity plan

The department's *Cultural diversity plan* is consistent with the framework of the *Departmental plan*, with a number of initiatives aligned to each departmental objective to improve responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity.

For more information regarding the *Departmental plan 2007–08* visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan

Objective 1 – Building sustainable, well-managed and efficient human services

Important considerations in building sustainable, well-managed and efficient human services include:

- governance and representation
- strong and effective partnerships with health, housing and community sectors
- workforce diversity
- appropriate skills.

What will we do?

1.1 – We will promote good governance by:

- ensuring that relevant boards and committees include people from CALD backgrounds. The *Multicultural Victoria Act* requires government departments to report annually regarding this representation.

1.2 – We will build strong partnerships by:

- funding the Victorian Refugee Health Network to build the capacity of the human services system to provide more accessible and appropriate services for people from a refugee background, with a particular emphasis on issues in rural and regional Victoria
- supporting existing internal and external mechanisms to promote cultural responsiveness in policy and service delivery, for example, health service cultural diversity committees and the Statewide Disability CALD Advisory Group
- establishing an annual Department of Human Services Forum on Cultural Diversity, with a small number of expert working groups reporting to individual Ministers to provide advice on key issues for the department
- funding key organisations to strengthen the capacity of human services systems to support the needs of CALD Victorians.

1.3 – We will support workforce diversity by:

- having diversity and equity coordinators and advisors in each of the department's regions and its central office to promote the value of a diverse workforce and to ensure that all staff are respected and valued
- ensuring employment policies and practices of the department actively encourage people of diverse backgrounds to apply for department positions
- organising annual forums to celebrate Cultural Diversity Week and World Refugee Day to showcase the strengths and achievements of CALD and refugee communities to departmental staff.

1.4 – We will strengthen the skills of the human services workforce by:

- supporting regional staff to participate in training sessions run by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture focusing on understanding the refugee experience and its impact on individuals, families and communities
- funding cultural awareness training across a range of human services sectors, such as mental health services, child protection, housing, drug and alcohol services and disability services to strengthen the cultural competency of departmental staff and funded agencies
- supporting training of interpreters employed by the department's language services credit line provider to strengthen their knowledge about a range of health and wellbeing issues, terminology and service systems.

Objective 2 – Providing timely and accessible human services

Cultural and linguistic diversity can influence when and how people access or use human services. Given demographic changes over time and the dynamic nature of culture and language, it is important to ensure that policy development and program and service delivery are flexible to meet changing needs.

Providing language services for people who need an interpreter or translated material is central to ensuring accessibility. The department's *Language services policy* recognises that effective communication is essential to delivering high-quality services. The policy outlines the requirements necessary to enable people who speak little or no English or whose first language is Auslan, to access professional interpreting and translating services when making significant life decisions and where essential information is being communicated. This is reinforced through a number of departmental charters, which explicitly state that an interpreter will be provided if required or that information must be explained in a language or manner that can be understood.

Although most health and human service sectors use language services to full capacity, there are other areas where language services are underutilised.

What will we do?

2.1 – We will understand needs and manage changing demand by:

- supporting the Refugee Health Nurse Program to respond to the specific health needs of newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants; there are refugee health nurse positions in six metropolitan and three regional locations across Victoria
- undertaking a Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) project to assist agencies with planning how best to work with communities affected by female genital mutilation and develop a more coordinated approach to health promotion across the program agencies
- dedicating multicultural youth justice workers to work with young people from a variety of CALD backgrounds in response to their over-representation in the juvenile justice system
- supporting health care providers in both primary health services and hospital-based refugee clinics to assess and treat newly-arrived immigrants and refugees.

2.2 – We will improve access to and quality of language services by:

- providing direct funding to funded agencies that are large users of language services to contribute to the purchase of interpreting and translating services
- managing a credit line system to ensure that smaller users of language services from the aged care, primary and community health (including dental health services), disability services, palliative care, alcohol and other drugs, mental health and homelessness services sectors have access to language services
- promoting the department’s *Language services policy* to guide departmental programs and funded agencies in implementing government language services policy
- working with health services to provide an opportunity for National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) unaccredited bilingual workers currently working as health interpreters in rare and emerging languages to improve their interpreting skills and build upon contextual knowledge of human services.

2.3 – We will provide accessible information by:

- ensuring that relevant materials – key brochures, booklets, surveys, fact sheets, website materials, DVDs, reports and newsletters – are translated into community languages, for example information regarding the Disability Act, to improve access to written and/or visual information for CALD Victorians
- promoting the Victorian Government’s revised *Guidelines for translations* to departmental program areas and funded agencies to facilitate consistent quality in translations
- promoting and maintaining the *Health translations directory* website to share translated material
- using ethnic media and translated material to promote key programs and activities, such as the new *State concessions – your entitlements*.

Objective 3 – Improving human service safety and quality

Consultation and research suggests that people from CALD backgrounds may experience disparities in the quality and safety of their care within human services settings. Cultural diversity must be central to any analysis of quality and safety assessments. The *Service excellence framework* used by regions and many program areas provides a structured approach to assessing and improving the performance of leadership and management systems, including data collection and analysis.

What will we do?

3.1 – We will improve planning for diversity, data collection and analysis by:

- applying the *Service excellence framework* to a range of department programs and regions to assist with planning for workforce diversity and demographic changes
- supporting data collection and analysis to better understand needs and service gaps for CALD Victorians.

Objective 4 – Promoting least intrusive and earliest effective care

The delivery of culturally responsive and equitable services is a core expectation of department programs and funded agencies. A number of program areas already have cultural diversity plans or strategies. In addition, some program areas require their funded agencies to complete cultural diversity plans or strategies. These plans and strategies will continue to provide a framework for action within specific sectors or services:

- Disability Services *Cultural and linguistic diversity strategy*
- Home and community care (HACC) *Cultural planning strategy*
- *Cultural diversity plan for Victoria’s specialist mental health services*
- *Health service cultural diversity plans.*

What will we do?

4.1 – We will ensure cultural diversity is considered in the design and delivery of services by:

- developing resources to support health, mental health services and community health services to embed cultural diversity responsiveness into their corporate structure, building on work undertaken to date through their cultural diversity plans and/or quality of care reporting
- finalising the *Cultural equitable gateways strategy* (CEGS) to allow more time for existing CEGS projects, which target people from CALD backgrounds aged 65 plus utilising HACC program services, to integrate into HACC services
- developing approaches to guide work across the alcohol and other drug service system to promote program accessibility and responsiveness to CALD Victorians
- distributing the *Gender and diversity lens* to assist the department and funded agencies to consider the gender implications of their work and ensure planning and implementation of any new initiatives that acknowledge the interaction between gender, diversity and disadvantage
- working collaboratively with the mental health sector to implement the strategies in the *Cultural diversity plan for specialist mental health services 2006–2010* to improve access and quality of services to CALD Victorians
- exploring and developing broader cross-cultural competence and service development across the child protection and family service sectors to meet the needs of diverse families
- developing a policy on culturally appropriate practice to assist disability service providers provide people with a disability, their families and carers from CALD communities equal access to supports and services that meet their needs in culturally appropriate ways. This policy will be part of the *Policy and information manual* developed to support the implementation of the Disability Act 2006
- ensuring Family and out of home care services develop a plan to respond to cultural diversity as part of the new registration standards.

Objective 5 – Strengthening the capacity of individuals, families and communities

The department faces a challenge to promote a healthier and more socially inclusive population able to participate fully in society and the economy. To address this challenge the department will provide greater opportunities for diverse individuals, families and communities to participate.

What will we do?

5.1 – We will create greater opportunities for CALD individuals, families and communities to participate by:

- promoting consumer, carer and community involvement in decision making about their own treatment and care, in service development and quality improvement, and more broadly in health policy developments under the *Doing it with us, not for us* framework, which supports participation of CALD Victorians
- ensuring that Neighbourhood Renewal continues to support and encourage residents from disadvantaged communities, including CALD communities, to participate in a broad range of social, cultural, and economic activities
- managing the Refugee Minor Program to assist unaccompanied young people and children coming to Victoria with settlement and establishment into their new communities through a casework approach
- supporting MetroAccess, RuralAccess and DeafAccess workers to undertake community development work engaging with CALD communities across metropolitan and rural Victoria so that they are more welcoming and inclusive of all people with disabilities.

Objective 6 – Reducing inequalities through improving health and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged people and communities

Economic and social trends often favour groups in society with the means or opportunities to manage their own health and wellbeing. Disadvantaged groups tend to depend more heavily on a wider range of health, welfare and housing services. It will therefore be crucial that CALD Victorians experiencing disadvantage receive integrated, appropriate and accessible human services.

What will we do?

6.1 – We will review the effectiveness of service delivery to CALD Victorians by:

- developing a Cultural diversity guide outcomes tool, to support the department and its funded agencies to understand the effectiveness of existing and potential service delivery to CALD Victorians
- investigating how refugee young people access, interpret and implement sexual health information, to promote and improve their sexual health and wellbeing
- developing and implementing recommendations in the *HACC cultural planning strategy evaluation report*
- developing and funding a number of pilot projects in response to the evaluation of CEGS and under the *Future directions in culturally appropriate access to HACC program core services*. Projects will assist ethno specific and multicultural agencies to explore and develop mechanisms to assist CALD Victorians to access HACC and other related services.

6.2 – We will target health promotion activity by:

- increasing access to immunisation for recently arrived refugees and equitable protection against vaccine preventable diseases for all children
- building on consultation with peak CALD organisations and health professionals to implement a ‘Go for your life’ demonstration project (2007–2010). This project will be managed by Westbay Primary Care Partnership and will concentrate on themes of being active and eating well in CALD communities
- supporting ‘Kids Go for your life’ to work with the Royal Children’s Hospital to train bilingual educators and develop training resources and visually based message sheets in English and five community languages
- supporting integrated health promotion aligned with the department’s *Health Promotion Priorities 2007–2011* with the overarching aim of improving overall health and reducing health inequalities.

7. Issues and challenges

The initiatives listed above will further strengthen culturally appropriate responses by the department and its funded agencies. The department still faces a number of challenges, which will require attention.

- Understanding cultural diversity and its implications for policy development and service delivery. Key to this will be developing consistent approaches to collecting data about the cultural and linguistic diversity of clients, consumers and patients. Furthermore, it will be necessary to work in partnership with key stakeholders to interpret the data and consider the policy and service implications.
- The *Cultural diversity plan for Victoria's specialist mental health services* provides a framework for action to 2009. Collaboration between mental health services, ethno-specific and multicultural agencies and the department is required to address concerns such as the continued underutilisation of language services.
- Cultural competence across the human services workforce is consistent with the department's recently released *People strategy 2007–2010*, which recognises the value of a diverse workforce. Appropriate induction into the organisation is another key outcome of the strategy. Induction for department staff is managed differently in each of the regions and in each of the program areas that provide direct care services. Consistency of training, including training for staff at different stages of their career path, will assist in ensuring the workforce is competent in providing services to CALD Victorians.

The Department of Human Services Cultural diversity plan – Summary

Objective	Continuing activity	New initiatives	Department lead responsibility
Objective 1 – Building sustainable, well-managed and efficient human services			
1.1 – We will promote good governance by:	ensuring that relevant boards and committees include people from CALD backgrounds		Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
1.2 – We will build strong partnerships by:		funding the Victorian Refugee Health Network	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
	supporting existing internal and external mechanisms to promote cultural responsiveness in policy and service delivery		Department wide
		establishing an annual Department of Human Services forum on Cultural Diversity, with a small number of expert working groups reporting to individual Ministers to provide advice on key issues for the department	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
	funding key organisations to strengthen the capacity of human services systems to support the needs of CALD Victorians		Department wide
1.3 – We will support workforce diversity by:	having diversity and equity positions in each of the department's regions and its central office to promote the value of a diverse workforce and to ensure that all staff are respected and valued		Operations
	ensuring employment policies and practices of the department actively encourage people of diverse backgrounds to apply for department positions		Operations
	organising annual forums to celebrate Cultural Diversity Week and World Refugee Day		Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
1.4 – We will strengthen the skills of the human services workforce by:		supporting regional staff to participate in training sessions run by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
	funding cultural awareness training across a range of human services sectors to strengthen the cultural competency of departmental staff and funded agencies		Most divisions
		supporting training of interpreters employed by the department's language services credit line provider	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects

Objective	Continuing activity	New initiatives	Department lead responsibility
Objective 2 – Providing timely and accessible human services			
2.1 – We will understand needs and manage changing demand by:	supporting the Refugee Health Nurse Program to respond to the specific health needs of newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants		Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
	undertaking a Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) project to assist agencies with planning how best to work with communities affected by female genital mutilation and develop a more coordinated approach to health promotion		Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
	dedicating multicultural youth justice workers to work with young people from a variety of backgrounds in the juvenile justice system		Children Youth and Families
	supporting health care providers in both primary health services and hospital-based refugee clinics to assess and treat newly arrived immigrants and refugees		Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
2.2 – We will provide language services by:	improving the access to and quality of language service provision in human services by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing direct funding to the department’s funded agencies • managing a credit line system 		Department wide
	promoting the department’s <i>Language services policy</i> (2005) to guide departmental programs and funded agencies in implementing government language services policy		Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
		working with health services to provide an opportunity for National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) unaccredited bilingual workers to improve their interpreting skills and build upon contextual knowledge of human services	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
2.3 – We will provide information in an accessible format by:	ensuring that relevant materials are translated into community languages to improve access to written information for CALD Victorians		Department wide
		promoting the Victorian Government’s revised <i>Guidelines for translations</i> to facilitate consistent quality in translations	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
	promoting and maintaining the <i>Health translations directory</i> website to share translated material		Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
	using ethnic media and translated material to promote key programs and activities		Department wide

Objective	Continuing activity	New initiatives	Department lead responsibility
Objective 3 – Improving human service safety and quality			
3.1 – We will improve CALD data collection and analysis by:		applying the department's <i>Service excellence framework</i> to a range of department programs and regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Services • Operations • Housing and Community Building • Regions
		supporting data collection and analysis to better understand need and service gaps for CALD Victorians	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
Objective 4 – Promoting least intrusive and earliest effective care			
4.1 – We will ensure cultural diversity is considered in the design and delivery of services by:		developing resources to support health services embed cultural diversity responsiveness into their corporate structure	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
	finalising the <i>Cultural equitable gateways strategy</i> (CEGS) to allow more time for existing CEGS projects to integrate into HACC services		Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
		developing approaches to guide work across the alcohol and other drug service system to promote program accessibility and responsiveness to CALD Victorians	Mental Health and Drugs
		distributing the <i>Gender and diversity lens</i> to assist the department and funded agencies to consider the gender implications of their work	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
		working collaboratively with the mental health sector to implement the strategies in the <i>Cultural diversity plan</i> for specialist mental health services 2006–2010 to improve access and quality of services to CALD Victorians	Mental Health and Drugs
		exploring and developing broader cross-cultural competence and service development across the child protection and family service sectors to meet the needs of diverse families	Children Youth and Families
		developing a policy on culturally appropriate practice to assist disability service providers provide people with a disability, their families and carers from CALD communities equal access to supports and services that meet their needs in culturally appropriate ways	Disability Services
		ensuring Family and out of home care services develop a plan to respond to cultural diversity as part of the new registration standards	Children Youth and Families

Objective	Continuing activity	New initiatives	Department lead responsibility
Objective 5 – Strengthening the capacity of individuals, families and communities			
5.1 – We will create greater opportunities for CALD individuals, families and communities to participate by:	promoting consumer, carer and community involvement in decision making about their own treatment and care under the <i>Doing it with us, not for us</i> framework, which supports participation of CALD Victorians		Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
	ensuring that Neighbourhood Renewal continues to support and encourage residents from disadvantaged communities		Housing and Community Building
	managing the Refugee Minor Program to assist unaccompanied young people and children coming to Victoria		Children Youth and Families
	supporting MetroAccess, RuralAccess and DeafAccess workers to undertake community development work so that CALD Victorians are more welcoming and inclusive of all people with disabilities		Disability Services
Objective 6 – Reducing inequalities through improving health and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged people and communities			
6.1 – We will review the effectiveness of service delivery to CALD Victorians by:		developing a <i>Cultural diversity guide</i> outcomes tool to support the department and its funded agencies to understand the effectiveness of existing and potential service delivery to CALD Victorians	Portfolio Services and Strategic Projects
		investigating how refugee young people access, interpret and implement sexual health information	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
		developing and implementing recommendations in the <i>HACC cultural planning strategy evaluation report</i>	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
		developing and funding a number of pilot projects to assist ethno specific and multicultural agencies to explore and develop mechanisms to assist people from CALD backgrounds to access HACC services	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
6.2 – We will target health promotion activity by:		increasing access to immunisations for recently arrived refugees and equitable protection against vaccine preventable diseases for all children	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
		building on consultation with peak CALD organisations and health professionals to implement a ‘Go for your life’ demonstration project (2007–2010)	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
		supporting ‘Kids Go for your life’ to work with the Royal Children’s Hospital to train bilingual educators and develop training resources and visually-based message sheets	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services
		supporting integrated health promotion programs by implementing the <i>Health Promotion Priorities 2007–2011</i> with the overarching aim of improving overall health and reducing health inequalities	Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services

Appendix – Demographic and settlement data

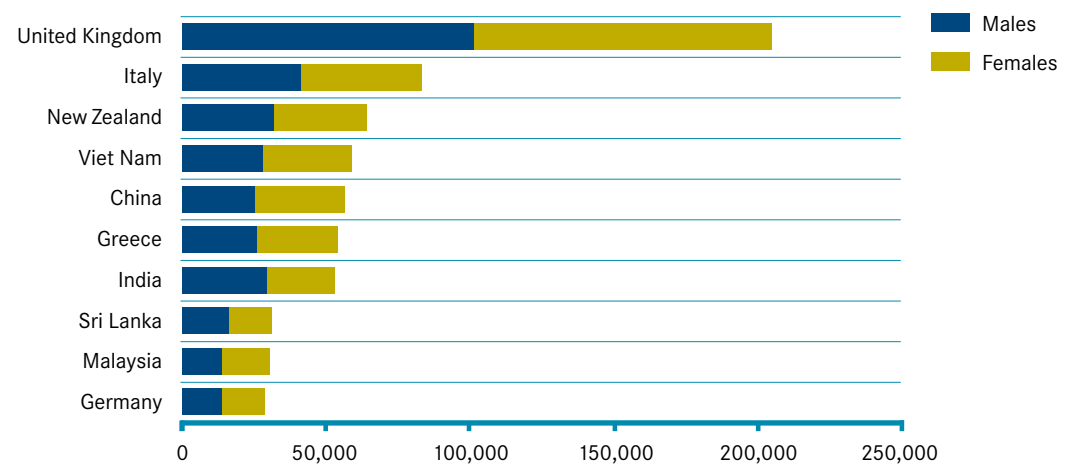
Demographics – 2006 Australian Census of Population and Housing

Cultural diversity in Victoria

According to the 2006 Census:

- 24 per cent of Victorians were born overseas, just under three-quarters of whom were born in countries where English was not the main language spoken
- 44 per cent of Victorians have at least one parent born overseas
- 20 per cent of Victorians speak a language other than English at home, with over 200 languages and dialects spoken
- Victorians observe 130 religions and faiths.

Top 10 countries of birth, Victoria



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, ABS, Canberra, 2006.

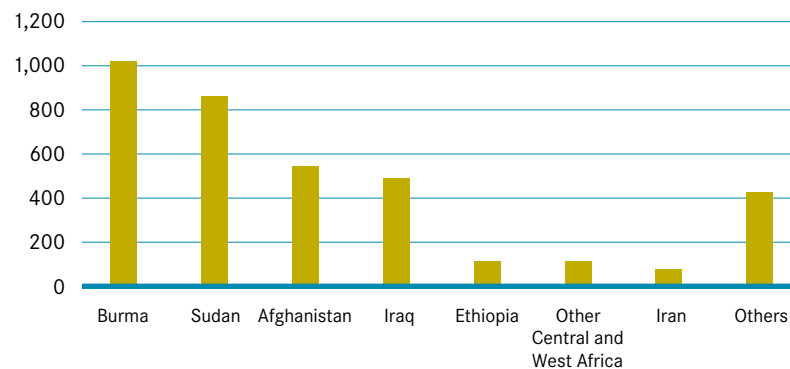
Note: About 10 per cent of Census respondents did not state their country of birth or were born elsewhere. The Census lists 24 countries of birth other than Australia, however almost 4 per cent of respondents or just over 192,000 people were born in countries, mainly smaller nations, not listed by the Census. Furthermore, about 6 per cent of respondents or around 324,000 people stated that they were born overseas but did not specify their country of birth.

Humanitarian Program entrants to Victoria 2006-07

Permanent entry to Australia can be through the Migration Program (for skilled and family migrants) or the Humanitarian Program (for refugees and others in humanitarian need). The Humanitarian Program comprises two components: offshore resettlement for people in humanitarian need overseas, and onshore protection for those people already in Australia claiming its protection. In 2006–07, over 3,600 entrants came to Victoria under the Humanitarian Program. Of these entrants, just over 2,000 people came under the Special Humanitarian Program (sponsored by a ‘proposer’), and almost 1,500 under the refugee category. A further 131 people applied for protection onshore, with the largest numbers coming from Sri Lanka, China and Iraq.

The largest group of new arrivals in 2006–07 came from Burma, with 1,019 entrants accounting for 28 per cent of all arrivals. Sudanese entrants were the second largest group with 866 people accounting for 24 per cent of new arrivals. In 2006–07, there were also significant numbers of people settling in Victoria from Afghanistan, with 537 entrants, and Iraq with 492 entrants. Most of the Middle East entrants were sponsored under Special Humanitarian Program visas. Smaller numbers of people came from Ethiopia, Liberia, Iran, Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

Humanitarian Program entrants by country of birth, Victoria, 2006-07



Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship Settlement Database, August 2007.

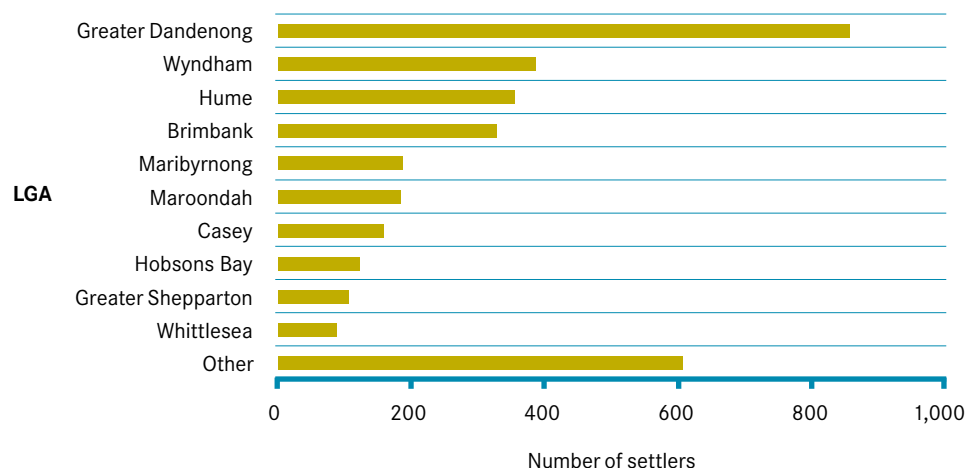
Note: Settlement data shows significant numbers of new arrivals who were born in countries with large refugee camps (including Kenya, Egypt and Thailand). For the chart above, children born in refugee camps have been included as coming from the same source country as their families. For example, the settlement data shows that in the last year, there were 270 humanitarian arrivals from Thailand, all of which were ethnic minorities from Burma born in Thailand.

Humanitarian entrant settlement – top 10 local government areas, Victoria, 2006-07

In 2006-07, the largest number of entrants again settled initially in the City of Greater Dandenong, accounting for 31 per cent of total entrants. However, numbers settling in Wyndham and Hume were greater than numbers settling in Brimbank for the first time, attracting 14.5 per cent and 13.2 per cent of total entrants respectively. Numbers of new arrivals are also proportionally increasing in other local government areas (LGAs) such as Maribyrnong, Maroondah and Hobsons Bay, with fewer people settling in Darebin compared with 2005-06.

Numbers of entrants settling in Greater Shepparton were again high, with 4 per cent of all arrivals, most of whom were sponsored through the Special Humanitarian Program. However this data only captures the immediate arrival of people from a refugee background to local government areas and does not reflect the relocation of humanitarian entrants post-arrival, which appeared to increase markedly during 2006-07.

Humanitarian Program entrants by LGA 2006-07, Victoria



Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship Settlement Database, August 2007.

