Multicultural communities and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds

A GUIDE TO ENGAGEMENT
MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE FROM CULTURALLY, LINGUISTICALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

A guide to engagement

Whether people have been here for generations, are recent permanent migrants or are temporary residents in Tasmania, such as international students, short-term workers and tourists, we all play an important role in enhancing community capacity and building a socially inclusive society.

Tasmania has a rich history of migration to the State:

- Of the 26,000 tertiary students in Tasmania, 3,000 (or 11.5 per cent) are international students from over 100 countries.
- More than 57,650 people (or 11.6 per cent of the total Tasmanian population) were born overseas.
- The top countries of birth for overseas born Tasmanians are: England, New Zealand, Scotland, Netherlands, Germany and People's Republic of China.
- Over 24 per cent of Tasmanians, or 113,969 people, have one or both parents born overseas.
- The top five countries for permanent immigration in the past 10 years are: United Kingdom, People’s Republic of China, India, South Africa and the Philippines. Overseas born Tasmanians comprised migrants from 170 countries, of which approximately 155 are non-English speaking countries.
- There are more than 24 religious faiths.
- Over 129 languages are spoken in Tasmania and more than 22,000 people speak a language other than English in the home. This includes over 2,300 people who have little or no spoken English.
- The most common languages spoken in the home are English, Mandarin, German, Italian, Greek and Dutch.

While Tasmania receives fewer permanent migrants compared with other Australian states and territories, each year Tasmania accepts over 1,200 permanent migrants.

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1 Unless otherwise stated, all data is from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Census of Population and Housing Tasmania ABS, Canberra, or Department of Immigration and Citizenship Settlement Reporting Facility.
BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with multicultural communities and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds benefits the design, implementation and review of policies, programs and services. Engagement can ensure that:

- access to and equity of services can be improved;
- community needs and priorities are addressed;
- critical information is provided and shared;
- feedback is provided on the quality and effectiveness of services;
- policies, programs and services are culturally appropriate and responsive;
- the needs and issues affecting these communities are taken into account in the development and implementation of language policies and communication strategies; and
- there is greater understanding of cultural differences.

Engagement is most effective if people are involved in the planning and engagement process and interactions with staff are culturally sensitive.

CONCERNS FOLLOWING MIGRATION

People who are relatively new to Tasmania are primarily concerned with the issues of settling, such as accessing housing, establishing children in schools, and enrolling in English language classes.

For some new migrants, traumatic experiences prior to their migration are often compounded by separation from family members, while for others, family roles and intergenerational relationships can be challenged.

Once migrants have been in Tasmania for some time, their concerns may change. Maintenance of cultural values and practices, gaining meaningful employment, and concern for the safety and wellbeing of relatives not in Australia may become their primary concerns. Accessing appropriate services and support may also be an issue.
CHALLENGES TO ENGAGEMENT

Multicultural communities and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds may face a number of challenges in Tasmania that can affect their engagement, such as:

- learning and adjusting to a new political system;
- difficulties in navigating government structures and understanding government processes, roles and responsibilities;
- adjusting to a different culture and language;
- coping with the emotions associated with leaving friends and family behind;
- exposure to racism;
- securing affordable and appropriate housing;
- gaining ongoing employment; and
- access to General Practitioners and other health services.

In addition to these challenges, building trust, language and literacy, cultural practices and whether the subject for engagement is culturally sensitivity may impact on the success of community engagement.

Depending on the period of time spent in Australia, migration experience, country of origin and pre-migration experience, communities may have mixed attitudes towards government. There may be suspicion or scepticism around the reasons for being consulted and unrealistic expectations about the outcomes. Also, some community members are fearful of people in authority, such as police or those working for government agencies, and it may be difficult to overcome long-held suspicions and experiences of corruption and abuse of power by people and organisations in authority.

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Effective and strategic communication is particularly important for people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds, as the way information is presented, received, understood and analysed is culturally-specific in all groups.
Communication can be supported through a well-planned communication strategy that takes into consideration the need for:

- written, electronic and verbal information translated or made available in Plain English for people who are not proficient in the English language;
- communicating in the culturally, linguistically or religiously diverse communities’ preferred medium (some communities may prefer printed information rather than verbal);
- employing bicultural workers or interpreters at face-to-face engagements (please refer to your agencies’ policies and procedures for obtaining an interpreter); and
- allowing sufficient time for cross-cultural input and communication.

As with all decisions to engage, be mindful that it may not be productive to engage if there is no scope to act on feedback received.

TOOLS AND METHODS

In choosing the best tools/methods for engaging with culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities, you should consider:

- the nature of the issue (single issue and interest group focus or multilayered affecting the broader community);
- the nature of the community;
- the amount and type of resources available for engagement;
- the capacity of individuals or communities for engagement;
- the nature of any support or incentives which may be helpful in enabling or encouraging community members to participate (such as transport assistance or access to training);
- the purpose and objectives of engagement (such as to gather information or to test options); and
- information-sharing techniques.
Having considered the scope of an engagement activity, the methods and tools for engagement may include:

- providing information in creative and culturally inclusive ways (written, spoken, electronic, printed or otherwise creative mediums);
- developing multilingual and multimedia information strategies. Consider utilising pre-established ethnic and community radio stations, websites, press and other media (such as Hobart FM 92.1, community and multicultural broadcasters; Launceston-based community radio station, City Park Radio; or media used by community-based organisations);
- utilising networks and consulting with community organisations who can link you to communities and support engagement (such as the Multicultural Council of Tasmania);
- appointing people from diverse backgrounds to decision-making and advisory committees to enhance established partnerships and communication processes; and
- contacting community leaders, elders or representatives. Consider inviting these people for face-to-face engagement and collaboration.

The A to Z of engagement techniques developed by the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Your Care, Your Say project, provides an excellent overview of methods for community engagement.

**PLANNING ENGAGEMENT**

Many people from multicultural communities and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds have commitments with work, family and community that may limit the time and energy they have available for engagement. Some communities may also feel over-consulted.

In light of these factors, one of the most effective ways to engage may be through existing community events or meetings that are already scheduled for a time, date and venue convenient for that community.

If engaging outside existing community structures, ensure that the event has resources available to support:

- translating and interpreting;
- hiring appropriate venues;
catering;
- child care;
- transport support; and
- capacity building, as required.

When organising the venue, date and time for an event:

- refer to the Department of Social Services’ Calendar of Cultural and Religious Dates (http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-services/calendar-of-cultural-and-religious-dates) to avoid scheduling conflicts with the community’s significant cultural and religious dates;
- demonstrate respect for the community and balance power relations by enabling engagement in venues familiar to the community group being engaged; and
- recognise that issues of respect and cultural norms may not enable all community members (such as women and young people) to participate at once. Separate meetings may be held to facilitate the involvement of all community members.

**Awareness**

Make sure you are aware of cultural practices and sensitivities. You will need to research and understand the community that you wish to engage with. You will also need to:

- develop skills and knowledge about multicultural communities and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds;
- understand the cultural context and the potential for significant cultural differences between people in terms of spiritual, ecological, consensual and communal beliefs and values;
- recognise that multicultural communities are extremely diverse; and
- understand the impacts of racism and prejudice.

**Communication**

Consider language and literacy issues. Where appropriate:

- confirm the language spoken by the community and use a professional interpreter;
translate information into community languages, bearing in mind that some migrants and former humanitarian entrants are not literate in their own language; and

train staff in cross-cultural competency and responsive service delivery, the use of interpreters, and engagement skills.

Government agencies may have polices and protocols for engaging translators and interpreters. If you are consulting on behalf of a Government agency that does not have a policy, consult the Multicultural Language Services Guidelines for Tasmanian Government Agencies, which provides a set of useful information sheets [www.dpac.tas.gov.au/multicultural](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/multicultural)

Feedback should be provided to participants, with careful consideration of preferred language, media and any requirement for translation of these. It is important to allow the opportunity for questions or any requests for further information from your participants.

**Trust and Respect**

Many communities highly value honesty and respect and, therefore, demonstrating respect is one of the most important elements of building trust. Acknowledge the communities’ protocols, beliefs, practices and values and conduct your engagement accordingly.

Building trust between your organisation and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities is essential for supporting sustainable and amicable relationships. Some strategies include:

- establishing long-term relationships;
- using bilingual staff;
- regularly providing information;
- developing public relations activities;
- holding open days (if relevant);
- providing one-on-one support to participants or clients;
- ensuring accessible services and staff; and
- explaining processes, structures and systems.
RELEVANT TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND LEGISLATION


- Tasmanian Multicultural Policy 2014
- Tasmanian Government Work Placement Program
- Cross-Cultural Competency Training package (available 2014)
- Community Profiles (available 2014).

WHERE DO I START?

Contact non-government organisations or government agencies that are involved with multicultural communities on an ongoing basis and have already established relationships. They will help identify the key stakeholders to consult with, such as community leaders, elders and representatives, or key cultural-based associations.

It is important to note that community associations and leaders may not always be the best way to engage with some communities, as they will never have the capacity to be wholly representative of that community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>CONTACT DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Premier and Cabinet, Communities, Sport and Recreation (CSR)</td>
<td>CRS through its Principal Liaison Officer, provides information and advice on engaging with multicultural communities and people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Web:</strong> <a href="http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csrt">www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csrt</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:multicultural@dpac.tas.gov.au">multicultural@dpac.tas.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong> (03) 6232 7306</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td><em>The purpose of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is to 'build Australia’s future through the well-managed movement and settlement of people'.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website:</strong> <a href="http://www.immi.gov.au">www.immi.gov.au</a></td>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong> 131 881</td>
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<td><strong>Australian Government Department of Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Department of Social Services aims to improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dss.gov.au/contact-dss">www.dss.gov.au/contact-dss</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dssfeedback@dss.gov.au">dssfeedback@dss.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>1300 653 227 (Calls are charged at a local rate except from mobile phones which are charged at mobile rates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Red Cross</strong></td>
<td>Red Cross provides support to refugees, asylum seekers, immigration detainees and other people who are vulnerable as a result of migration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.redcross.org.au/migration-support.aspx">www.redcross.org.au/migration-support.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tas@redcross.org.au">tas@redcross.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6235 6077</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Centacare Tasmania</strong></td>
<td>Centacare responds to the needs of disadvantaged or marginalised individuals, families and the community by providing services that will enhance human dignity and freedom and enable people to realise their full potential.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.centacaretas.org.au">www.centacaretas.org.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.centacaretas.org.au/contact/">www.centacaretas.org.au/contact/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>South (03) 6278 1660&lt;br&gt;North (03) 6332 0600&lt;br&gt;North West (03) 6431 8555 or 1800 819 447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department of Education</strong></td>
<td>The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Program provides intensive English language support for new arrival students from Kindergarten to grade 12.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.education.tas.gov.au">www.education.tas.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eal.program@education.tas.gov.au">eal.program@education.tas.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6233 7719</td>
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<td><strong>Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Northern Tasmania</strong></td>
<td>MRC Northern Tasmania aims to provide relevant services and resources to promote the benefit and wellbeing of humanitarian and migrant entrants to Tasmania, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mrcltn.org.au">www.mrcltn.org.au</a></td>
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<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:admin@mrcltn.org.au">admin@mrcltn.org.au</a></td>
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<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6332 2211</td>
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| **Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Southern Tasmania** | MRC Southern Tasmania aims to provide leadership in the community to embrace cultural diversity by delivering responsive services for migrants, particularly those who are socially and financially disadvantaged.  
Website: [www.mrchobart.org.au](http://www.mrchobart.org.au)  
Email: [reception@mrchobart.org.au](mailto:reception@mrchobart.org.au)  
Phone: (03) 6221 0999 |
| **Multicultural Council of Tasmania** | The Tasmanian Government funds the Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT) as the peak body representing the interests of multicultural communities in Tasmania.  
Website: [www.mcot.org.au](http://www.mcot.org.au)  
Email: [mcot@tassie.net.au](mailto:mcot@tassie.net.au)  
Phone: (03) 6224 8838 |
| **Population Health, Department of Health and Human Services** | Population Health, through the Multicultural Health and Wellbeing Policy Officer, develops policy to promote improved health and wellbeing outcomes for people from multicultural backgrounds.  
Email: [multicultural.health@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:multicultural.health@dhhs.tas.gov.au)  
Phone: (03) 6222 7656 |
| **TasTAFE South, North and North West** | Migrant Education teams at TasTAFE help develop English language skills and cultural knowledge of life, work and further study.  
Website: [www.tastafe.tas.edu.au](http://www.tastafe.tas.edu.au)  
Phone: 1300 655 307 |

For further information or advice on engaging with multicultural communities and people from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, please contact the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Principal Liaison Officer - Multicultural by email at [multicultural@dpactas.gov.au](mailto:multicultural@dpactas.gov.au) or by telephone on (03) 6232 7306.