

Understanding Social Cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura: Literature Review

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Introduction

The literature review addresses what we already know about social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura, and surveys research from an extensive literature search. Literature covered includes historical literature, book chapters and books, academic journal articles, and various types of ‘grey literature’ (government, policy networks, community based organisations and other NGOs), and included a preliminary survey of news articles on multiculturalism and migration during the last five years in two local newspapers, Mildura’s *Sunraysia Daily*, and the *Shepparton News*. In addition, the review draws upon insights thus far gained from key informants from four field trips to Shepparton and Mildura, and also insights from a field trip to Bendigo, Swan Hill and Mildura conducted by the researchers in June, 2014. In the four recent field trips, we spoke to people from organisations including The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Shepparton Kiwanis, the Shepparton Police, GoTafe Multicultural Education Unit, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC), Mallee Family Care, Mildura Lions Club, the Campus directors and other staff at La Trobe University campuses at Shepparton and Mildura, and other Shepparton and Mildura community members.

In particular, the literature review is organised to respond to the first two aims of the project:

1. To identify the key success factors in Shepparton’s and Mildura’s experience of integrating their multicultural populations: What is working in Shepparton and Mildura as diverse communities? What are individuals, community based organisations, local government, policy makers, and businesses doing well in terms of getting along in a multicultural environment?
2. To identify the key points of stress in Shepparton’s and Mildura’s communities: Where and what are the problems? Are there groups of people in particular difficulty? Are there current, emerging or foreseeable tensions between different people in Shepparton and Mildura? And what might be done about them?

The sections of the literature review each address key issues and questions most relevant to the aims of the research project. The first section offers an overview of theoretical understandings and uses of ‘social cohesion’ in relevant studies and draws particularly on the

work of Jane Jenson, and its subsequent uptake in studies of multicultural societies. Jenson's model emphasises the importance of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy. This section highlights the point that most studies of social cohesion rely on quantitative methods, suggesting the necessity for the type of qualitative research being conducted in this VMC commissioned project. The second section outlines relevant historical background on Shepparton and Mildura with an emphasis on the economic foundations and socio-cultural dynamics of these regional cities and how they have developed in more recent history. The literature suggests that a history of immigration and cultural diversity is a significant part of the 'social imaginary' of Shepparton and Mildura that influences the way that ethnic, cultural and racial diversities are understood and approached today. The third section discusses the impacts of recent migrations, on the newer migrants and the communities they enter. Although there are difficulties faced by newer migrants, Shepparton and Mildura appear to have exceptional patterns of social cohesion, including for migrants of Muslim background, particularly when compared to other regional cities.

The fourth section of the literature review details key literature findings on issues of integration for newer migrants in regional cities. This research is especially important because the welfare and integration of the newest members of the community impact social cohesion in the whole community. The focus of this literature is largely on the roles that employment, employers, and meso-level organisations (such as SMECC and the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District) play in integrating newer community members, particularly those with CALD backgrounds. The fifth section outlines research conducted in Shepparton and Mildura measuring social capital and social attitudes. These findings suggest a complex picture for newer migrants, with some forms of social capital being stronger than others, and mixed community member feelings about the issues surrounding newer migrants and job availability and/or cultural difference. The sixth section deals with relevant government policies and frameworks that are aimed at building social cohesion in these multicultural cities. The seventh and final section offers an overview of potential barriers to social cohesion through an examination of social indicators reports in Shepparton and Mildura. These reports indicate there are concerns in both cities about growing inequality, lower than State average education outcomes and employment, and very socio-economically vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Australians, newer migrants, single-parent families, and youth. These issues, along with the rest of the reviewed literature, paint a picture of two

cities with histories of continued migration and relatively solid social cohesion, but with socio-economic concerns that have a direct impact on that cohesiveness.

1) Social Cohesion: Concept and General Research Findings of Relevance

Social Cohesion, along with multiculturalism, is a central concept for this project, and thus this review begins with an examination of theoretical understandings of the term, and in particular highlights what are taken to be its main dimensions in the literature. A useful starting point is Jane Jenson's (1998) 'Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research', that has been influential internationally and in the Australian context.

Jenson's (1998) account of the main dimensions of 'social cohesion' is drawn from an analysis of key Canadian and international reports and policy documents from the 1990s, and sociological theory implicitly or explicitly dealing with the broad theme. She highlights five such dimensions:

Belonging....Isolation

Inclusion....Exclusion

Participation....Non-involvement

Recognition....Rejection

Legitimacy....Illegitimacy

Jenson provides an account of the historical and more recent social scientific arguments about social cohesion that, she argues, have typically emerged at times of social crisis when people feared that societal unity was breaking down: for Emile Durkheim in late 19th Century Europe, Talcott Parsons in the 1930s and 1940s in America, and social scientists and policy makers in the 1980s and 1990s, including those from the OECD, coming to terms with the aftermath of neo-liberal policy from the 1970s onwards.

Social Cohesion typically contains notions of shared values and hopes, and consensus at a community level (which may be local, regional or national). Shared values, consensus, commitment and collective identity (feeling oneself to be part of a shared community) imply a sense of 'belonging', which is the first key dimension of social cohesion. Feelings of

isolation among individuals and groups threaten social cohesion. 'Inclusion' is understood especially in the sense of inclusion economically, through access to markets and employment in capitalist societies. By contrast exclusion, including systematic barriers, undermines social cohesion. 'Participation' is understood in a multi-dimensional way, but refers especially to political participation, and here the local level, including its key institutions, is seen as central. Disengagement from political structures and processes is indicative of a breakdown in social cohesion. 'Recognition' addresses the issue of the inherent plurality of most modern societies, and points to the importance for social cohesion of processes that directly recognize and accept plural value systems. Institutions are of crucial significance here: 'The necessary mediation of differences over power, resources and values is...assured by institutions, whether formal or informal, public or private.... The essential task for maintaining social cohesion is nurturing those institutions which contribute to, rather than undermine, practices of **recognition** of difference' (Jenson 1998, p. 16, bold in original). Feelings of acceptance, including for people from different ethnic, language, religious and other backgrounds, by the community, and recognition of one's contributions, is the opposite of feeling rejected because of one's difference, or experiencing intolerance in the broader community, which threaten social cohesion. Finally, the dimension of 'legitimacy' refers to acceptance of the mediating role of institutions in managing the inevitable differences and conflicts, including value differences and conflicts, in modern, plural, diverse societies. These institutions are diverse and multiple in a liberal-democratic state, and range from local, to intermediate and national. They include 'advocacy groups and other non-governmental organisations to political parties and governmental bodies' that 'assure the connections among individuals' (Jenson 1998, p. 16). Social cohesion partly depends upon 'maintaining the **legitimacy** of those public and private institutions that act as mediators and maintain the spaces within which mediation can occur' (Jenson 1998, p. 16, bold in original). Cynicism or high levels of negativity about these mediating institutions threaten social cohesion. Examples include forces that try to close down debate and refuse to recognize the legitimacy of different interests and groups that seek to be heard through these institutions.

Jenson maps within the Canadian policy and academic literature which level of society is most typically addressed in discussions of the different dimensions. As a general point, she notes that much social cohesion literature focuses on the local, since it is typically assumed that local, face to face communities are central to fostering social cohesion, an insight dating back to Durkheim's work (Jenson 1998, p. 19). However, Jenson noted that when the focus

was on the local community, the dimensions of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘recognition’ were rarely directly addressed, in part because when people think of local community, consensus rather than conflict and difference is stressed (Jenson 1998, p. 19). Much of the local community work on social cohesion emphasizes people’s sense of belonging to local community, and its importance (Jenson 1998, p. 19). Studies of social cohesion that are concerned with citizenship, multiculturalism and national identity typically take as their focus the larger region, or even the national community, rather than the local community (Jenson 1998, p. 20). Once studies move beyond the local community the focus is centrally upon the dimensions of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘recognition’, and dimensions such as belonging are seen as clearly dependent upon these other two dimensions. In many of these studies the ‘recognition’ dimension is in fact seen as central, in the sense that ‘failure to address adequately the recognition dimension of social cohesion will have consequences for other dimensions (in particular legitimacy) and for economic well-being more generally’ (Jenson 1998, p. 20).

Jenson also raised important questions about the extent to which a concern with social cohesion, implying consensus and shared values, underplayed or displaced more critical voices that emphasised the negative consequences of increasing inequalities, social injustice and systemic discrimination (Jenson 1998, p. 37). The notion of ‘shared values’ itself had to be thought through carefully: which universally shared values were appropriate in the context of pluralist societies that exhibited value differences, and which values ‘can differ without threatening the capacity to engage in “developing a community”’? (Jenson 1998, p. 31). Is it enough to share political values, like commitment and loyalty to the country, and to democracy and shared political forms? Do people need to share symbols? Is a sense of a national identity necessary? Can several different identities coexist together without threatening social cohesion? Highlighting a point emphasised in the Club of Rome’s *The Limits of Social Cohesion* (Berger 1998), Jenson noted that value differences were not in themselves a threat to social cohesion, ‘it is how they are managed that counts’ (Jenson 1998, p. 17).

- These comments and questions raise key questions to address and attempt to answer in our research: What ‘shared values’ are important for social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura, and how do these ‘shared values’ interact with significant differences among the diverse peoples of these towns? How important, for social cohesion, is it for people to identify with Shepparton and

Mildura? How successfully do Shepparton and Mildura manage and value differences? Since legitimacy and recognition are rarely addressed at the level of local community research, how might we measure these things and what will we find by looking for them in Shepparton and Mildura?

Since 2007 The Scanlon Foundation in collaboration with Monash researchers has conducted a range of social surveys aimed at benchmarking Australia's levels of social cohesion. The first of the Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion surveys, by Markus and Dharmalingam (2007, p. 26), argued that social cohesion had five main dimensions:

- **Belonging** – shared values, identification with Australia, trust
- **Social justice and equity** - evaluation of national policies
- **Participation** - voluntary work, political and co-operative involvement
- **Acceptance (and rejection), legitimacy** - experience of discrimination, attitudes towards minorities, newcomers
- **Worth** – life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations.

Markus and Dharmalingam developed these dimensions after analysing theoretical and policy understandings of social cohesion, including the work of Jenson, that addressed issues such as shared values, a sense of shared purpose and goals, feelings that one belonged to the community and identifying with that community, and also the importance of reducing social inequalities (see Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, Ch. 3). For example, they accepted Maxwell's influential 1996 policy-oriented definition:

Social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community (Maxwell 1996: 13, cited in Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. 21).

Markus and Dharmalingam's (2007) 'social justice-equity' dimension reflects the sixth dimension 'equality...inequality' that Paul Bernard (1999) added to Jenson's five dimensions (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. 22). It, like concerns with discrimination, responds to Jenson's critical reflections on the way that social cohesion approaches may

deflect attention from other important ways of seeing social problems (referred to above). Markus and Dharmalingam noted that while there were different views of social cohesion, there was a generally shared consensus on key elements including:

- **Shared vision:** Most researchers maintain that social cohesion requires universal values, mutual respect and common aspirations or identity shared by their members.
- **A property of a group or a community:** Social cohesion tends to describe a well-functioning core group or community in which there are shared goals and responsibilities and a readiness to co-operate with the other members.
- **A process:** Social cohesion is generally viewed not simply as an outcome, but as a continuous and seemingly never-ending process of achieving social harmony (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. 25).

Australian society was considered to be socially cohesive when people:

- identify and feel a sense of **belonging** to Australia and **pride** in being Australian
- actively **participate** in political, economic and civic life
- feel **included** in relation to social justice and equality of opportunity
- **respect** minorities and newcomers and value diversity
- have **trust** in other people and **confidence** in public institutions
- are **satisfied with life** and optimistic about the future (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. 26, bold in original).

Markus and Dharmalingam (2007, p. 25) noted that there were differences of opinion about the main drivers for social cohesion, and the relative weight given to different factors in producing ongoing social harmony, but that the key areas of concern were:

- **Economic:** levels of unemployment and poverty, income distribution, population mobility, health, life satisfaction and sense of security, and government responsiveness to issues of poverty and disadvantage.
- **Political:** levels of political participation and social involvement, including the extent of voluntarism, the development of social capital, understood in terms of networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit.
- **Socio-cultural:** levels of consensus and divergence

The authors designed a set of survey questions to tap the five dimensions of social cohesion, and also included standard survey questions that could be used to track opinion, attitudes and experiences longitudinally and comparatively in relation to other surveys. These survey questions are wide-ranging, including questions about various levels of belonging, attitudes towards key public institutions, levels of participation (including volunteering and political participation, and participation in the community, including visiting people of different ethnic backgrounds in their homes), different types of social capital (i.e. bonding and bridging), attitudes to immigration and multiculturalism, experiences of discrimination, life satisfaction, feelings about the future, levels of personal and social trust, and so on; all seen as relevant to measuring social cohesion. By attending to variables including ‘region of residence, gender, level of education and qualification, age, [and] birthplace of respondents and their parents’, they argued that they could highlight areas, and groups, where social cohesion was threatened (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. xi).

Notable findings from that first report, and repeated in later reports, were significant differences between groups based on place of birth and English speaking or non-English speaking background. For example, the 2007 survey found that political and community participation (i.e. volunteering) were higher for the Australian born, less for the overseas born from English speaking backgrounds, and even less for the overseas born from non-English speaking backgrounds. There were large differences also in terms of experiences of discrimination in the previous year, with people of non-English background faring the worst. Shared values were seen as an important issue for social cohesion, and Markus and Dharmalingam found that length of residence of the overseas born had a positive significant effect on people identifying with ‘dominant Australian values’, suggesting that Australia strongly integrated immigrants over time into ‘national life and a shared value system’ (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. xii). Later in this literature review we will discuss findings from the Scanlon Foundation’s *Mapping Social Cohesion Local Areas Report 2013* (Markus 2014) that included Shepparton as one of its surveyed areas.

- It is worth noting that a key informant from Shepparton’s Gotafe Multicultural Education Unit expressed awareness of the issue of volunteering among some of Shepparton’s new migrant communities from non-English speaking backgrounds, and that the Multicultural Education Unit is seeking to encourage more volunteering from such groups through its programs. The key informant commented that getting newcomers to volunteer was important, as volunteering may not have been a part of

their culture when living in their original countries, but was an important feature of Shepparton's mainstream culture. Volunteering also builds connections between newcomers and the mainstream society of Shepparton, encouraging bridging social capital and contributing to social cohesion.

Dandy and Pe-Pua's (2013) research into social cohesion in multicultural Australia reviewed and analysed literature, government and community programs, and media, and conducted three area-based case studies - Mirrabooka/Balga (Western Australia), Blacktown (New South Wales) and Murray Bridge (South Australia). Their study is an examination of the factors in contemporary multicultural Australia driving social cohesion, division, and conflict. Their research provides qualitative, case-study evidence that they found augmented Australian research on social cohesion, such as the Scanlon Foundation Reports, and aimed to suggest factors that encourage and/or disrupt social cohesion particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians. Their findings and conclusions suggest that much of the cause of social division in Australian communities results from lack of intercultural interaction between groups, combined with misunderstandings/misinformation about 'different others', especially in regards to concerns over the allocation of economic and social resources.

- Findings from our initial fieldwork trips suggest there may be similar phenomena occurring in Mildura and Shepparton. Though we do not yet have a complete picture of social cohesion in these places, comments from interviewees suggest that any tensions or cultural misunderstandings are likely the result of misinformation and/or lack of genuine intercultural interaction. This is the view of community member stakeholders such as Dean Wickham, CEO of SMECC, who suggested there may be significant misunderstanding in the broader Mildura community about, for example, the types of jobs newer migrants are likely to do, and whether these same migrants pose a competition for scarce employment. We interviewed a Mildura community member, a middle-aged woman, who spoke at length about her frustration that the State government 'keeps bringing people [migrants] here when there's not enough jobs as it is'. This community member perceives a scarcity of employment and it impacts on her views of newer migrants and their place in the community. Similarly, a community member in Shepparton, when told by us about the nature of our research and what we hoped to investigate about multiculturalism and social cohesion, raised

the issue of a new housing development of more than 400 houses and asked ‘Why are they going to bring all these people in when we don’t have the jobs?’

The majority of relevant research on social cohesion to date consists of survey studies measuring attitudes, as well as statistics on economic outcomes. Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013, p. 126) suggest there is little research covering ‘genuine intercultural interactions’, the type of qualitative in-depth research that allows for an understanding of the personal and nuanced experiences of community members, and causal interactions of multiple social factors in individual life experiences, identities and relationships. They write that they wanted ‘to move beyond the restricted focus of acculturation and ethnic-relations research and to explore a whole community through the lens of a more comprehensive construct’ (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 2). This involves examining the community on multiple levels, including governmental, social/community groups, and individual experiences. Dandy and Pe-Pua acknowledge that such a study has strengths for understanding significant meaning and causation, as well as limitations in scope and applicability. They claim that their findings are indicative of key issues regarding Australian multicultural social cohesion, rather than entirely comprehensive or exactly representative of all Australian cities and regions.

Their primary framework for measuring social cohesion also draws on Jenson’s (1998) proposal of the five key indicators of social cohesion:

- belonging (shared values and identity)
- inclusion (equal opportunities for access)
- participation (engagement in structures and systems)
- recognition (respect and tolerance)
- legitimacy (pluralism).

Dandy and Pe-Pua’s findings are largely good news for Australian social cohesion, with numerous examples from each case study of ‘positive intercultural relations, a strong sense of community belonging for some groups, perceived equitable access to resources...participation in community activities and events, moderate confidence in government departments and police, and relatively low levels of social conflict’ (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, 146).

Their review of the current literature, and their case study findings, indicate that Australia performs fairly well by international standards on measures of general wellbeing. However, regarding issues directly linked to social cohesion in a multicultural society, there are points

in need of improvement. In addition to issues of social exclusion (for example for those experiencing low income, unemployment, poor health, and being Indigenous Australians) there are issues for some groups (particularly the more 'visible' groups) feeling socially unaccepted, not respected, and vilified or the victims of racism. Muslim, African, and Aboriginal Australians in particular have dealt with these sorts of vilifications (Muslims particularly since September 11, 2001). Importantly, there are significant issues with 'recognition' (social acceptance and proper recognition) amongst some refugee communities, Indigenous Australians, and Anglo Australians. Indigenous and Anglo Australians often feel excluded from governmental and community understandings and activities around Australian multiculturalism. Dandy and Pe-Pua found an overall 'lack of genuine, intercultural interaction amongst all ethnic groups in the community' (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 146). While there is evident relative social harmony in the case study communities, they found little evidence to suggest that different cultural groups are interacting in relationally meaningful ways that promote mutual understanding and belonging. The efforts to promote multiculturalism in the community have a notable absence of Anglo-Australian participation (the authors suggest Anglo participation and invited initiation of community programs for diversity would go a long way toward promoting intercultural interaction, e.g. promoting Anglo Australian culture as one of the multi-cultures).

- Dandy and Pe-Pua suggest there were limited 'relationally meaningful' interactions between culturally different groups. We asked interviewees whether they think there is much interaction between the differing cultural groups and the responses suggest some complexity in Mildura and Shepparton. Our initial fieldwork suggests two potential patterns: 1) There is some, be it limited, 'meaningful' interaction between *some* groups on a day-to-day basis, and 2) There is a high level of 'meaningful' interaction between groups during special organised events, such as multicultural festivals. Community member interviewees suggest there are notable distinctions between Australians of Indigenous background, Anglo, more established migrants (3rd, 4th generation), and newer migrants. There are, of course, significant variations within these broad categories, but there are dynamics relevant to these categories that arose in a number of the interviews. We aim to investigate what people mean by 'meaningful' interactions, and how they think these dynamics 'play out' in Mildura and Shepparton, and what implications they have for social cohesion.

Importantly, Dandy and Pe-Pua link these issues of social division to issues of social exclusion (the inverse of ‘inclusion’) in employment and community participation. This conclusion is of central importance to their overall findings. The indications of social division that they found are largely linked to perceived competition for resources (e.g. regarding housing affordability and access), rather than simply cultural/ethnic differences. They write that:

We would argue against an interpretation of ethnic/cultural diversity as the primary source of social division in Australia. Instead, it would appear that much social division stems from competition for material and social resources that is interpreted through a discourse of ethnic, cultural or racial difference. This may be enhanced by a media and political environment that promotes negative stereotypes and misinformation (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 146).

Dandy and Pe-Pua suggest that media play a particularly important role in social cohesion or division because of the significance of perceptions of the advantages or disadvantages that ‘others’ have in access to resources, and the way media can contribute to understanding of cultural differences. They write that the ‘Media can have a significant impact on social cohesion and discord through the promulgation of stereotypes and the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1998) and the silencing of minority groups’ (Fürsich, 2010, cited in Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 147). Again, it is the combination of misinformation about the distribution of resources combined with misunderstanding about cultural differences that results in racialised views of diverse others. The researchers found that media representations and discourse around ‘boat people’ were particularly divisive, and an example of this pattern of misinformation, misunderstanding, and racialised social division. Such public debate has ‘a negative impact on belonging among Australians from refugee backgrounds, and reinforces negative stereotypes and myths about refugee privilege among other Australians’ (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 147), as well as for Indigenous Australians. Dandy and Pe-Pua also found that the media, particularly local news media, may also play an important role in encouraging social *cohesion*. They conclude that local media also ‘challenged negative social stereotypes and promoted diversity and multiculturalism in the local community’, with an emphasis also on the importance of social media with younger generations, such as social networking sites (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 147).

- We conducted initial newspaper database research on the two primary local newspapers, the *Sunraysia Daily* (for Mildura) and the *Shepparton News*. These results, coupled with anecdotal reflections from community interviewees, including Shepparton Police, suggest the local newspapers play a mostly positive role toward promoting social cohesion, in regards to questions of multiculturalism. When searching “*multiculturalism*” over the last five years, almost all articles come back with a positive, celebratory tone which reflects community acceptance and social cohesion. When the keyword “*migrant*” is used, there seems to be more of a focus on the problems facing migrants in these towns and how they can be resolved, however this is significantly more prominent in the *Shepparton News* than the *Sunraysia Daily*. Further analysis may tell us something about the role of local media in influencing social cohesion. The community interviewees we have spoken to in both cities so far suggest that these newspapers are going some way toward dispelling some of the more sensationalist and politicised representations of multicultural society as found in larger State and National newspapers.

Dandy and Pe-Pua’s findings suggest an optimistic outlook for the development of social cohesion in Australia through the active cultivation of changes in knowledge, awareness, and perspective. In particular, there is tension around questions of access to housing and other economic and social resources. Misunderstanding about allocation of resources to specific groups combines with misunderstanding and stereotypes of ethnicity to form racialised resentments. Therefore, they conclude that promotion of mutual understanding and inter-cultural interaction will go some way toward fostering social cohesion.

Their most significant findings are summarised by these key factors (the following wording taken directly from the report, Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, pp. vii-viii):

- 1. Recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history is an important driver for social cohesion in Australia. ...**
- 2. Greater awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ in the Australian community is a driver for all social cohesion dimensions. ...**
- 3. Frequent, positive intercultural contact is a powerful driver for all dimensions of social cohesion,** particularly recognition. While intergroup contact can sometimes exacerbate tensions or lead to ‘racialising’ of grievances, under the right conditions it can reduce prejudice through improving mutual understanding and reducing anxiety

and threat between groups. However, intercultural interactions are significantly less common for Anglo-Australians and much intercultural contact is *among* migrants and second-generation groups.

- 4. Racism and discrimination disrupt all social cohesion dimensions. ...**
- 5. Support for culture maintenance among migrants, refugees and other cultural and/or linguistic minorities is a driver for belonging. ...**
- 6. Community activities and ‘social spaces’ can enhance the likelihood of positive intercultural interaction and enhance community belonging. ...**
- 7. Equality of access to resources drives social inclusion. ...**
- 8. Being able to communicate confidently with other community members is a driver for belonging, inclusion, and participation. ...**
- 9. Mentoring and leadership development for community capacity-building are drivers for social cohesion, particularly inclusion and participation. ...**
- 10. The active promotion of the value of diversity and pluralism at national (e.g., government policy, public institutions) and community (e.g., organizational cultures and policies) levels is a driver for legitimacy. ...**

Regarding the effectiveness of strategies for fostering and strengthening social cohesion, the researchers had the following advice:

What our case studies revealed is that the collaboration of government and community, a whole-of- government-and-community approach, make for successful, sustained and realisable pathways to enhancing social cohesion in multicultural Australia. Special emphasis is put on effective and genuinely consultative development of programs and strategies; adequate funding by Government; transparency in communicating these strategies and funding; and on including all groups (migrants/refugees/Humanitarian Entrants, Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians) as both target participants and facilitators (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. viii).

Dandy and Pe-Pua suggest three particular areas where further Australian research is needed. Of particular interest to our project are their findings that ‘there is little research on the effects of intergroup contact in Australia’, and that while ‘mutual acculturation is necessary for social cohesion’, there is little interaction between Anglo-Australians and other groups (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p.145). They write that, on the one hand, ‘there is little expectation

or requirement of Anglo-Australians to adjust or accommodate other cultures, or to help other cultural groups’, and on the other hand, ‘Anglo-Australians may see themselves as excluded from the process of acculturation and inter cultural interaction’ (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 132). One of their key findings is that there is quite limited intercultural interaction, and very little research on what interactions there are. They offer the recommendation that research be commissioned ‘to investigate mutual intercultural attitudes and behaviour involving Anglo-, Indigenous, and migrant/refugee/Humanitarian Entrant Australians’ (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. 145).

- Our research may partially fill this gap by investigating the perceptions and experiences of Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians (both community members and key organisation members) on social cohesion in their community in addition to migrant and refugee groups/individuals.

Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013) also suggest that much more research can be done to investigate the role of social media in social cohesion, especially among the younger generation. They found social media to be the primary source of information and social connection for the younger generations.

2) Relevant Historical Literature on Shepparton and Mildura

In understanding the research question concerning key success factors for multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura, the historical context must be considered as an important factor. Both towns have long histories of receiving diverse waves of immigrants, and this continues into the present. A survey of the historical literature suggests that both towns have been for the most part successful in integrating their diverse migrant populations. This is not to suggest that there have been no conflicts and tensions, or experiences of racial discrimination and ethnocentric prejudice. However, our reading of the literature would suggest that the communities have important positive historical memories and experiences of successful engagement, partly based on the significant, and locally recognised, economic contribution of waves of immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, that influence the way that ethnic, cultural and racial diversities are understood and approached today.

Mildura

Ronald Parsons' (1990) commissioned centenary history of the shire of Mildura, *Where the Mallee Meets the Murray*, is mainly focused on the early period from the 1880s through the 1920s, including the rise of irrigation systems and the creation of the Shire Council. Its first pages mention the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area, but there is no discussion of the long and significant history of Indigenous communities in the Mildura area, and of their ongoing presence, a point that has also been reiterated by interviewees in our initial fieldwork.

- Though older histories frequently present the Indigenous communities of Mildura as more relevant to the pre and early settlement years, our initial interviews and fieldwork in Mildura has pressed home to us the importance of the large Indigenous communities in Mildura, of their ongoing disadvantage but also of their important and ongoing contribution to Mildura's cultural fabric; contributions and cultural knowledge that are too often ignored and/or under-utilised at a local level.

Parsons' history has in its latter sections relevant accounts of different waves of migration to Mildura: Greeks after World War I; Italians and Yugoslavs from the 1920s, and then Turks from the early 1970s. He discusses some of the early tensions between British settlers and some of those from new European source countries during the 1920s, referring to newspaper reports, including reports that concerted efforts from the *Sunraysia Daily* and locals had caused Greek and Italian immigrants to return to Melbourne (Parsons 1990, p. 245). The newspaper argued that the reason was not 'racial', but rather economic, aimed at stopping people from using alien labour in a 'group system' on blocks. Unionised workers feared that their wages and conditions would be undercut by such 'alien' workers. Parsons notes that there was limited or no Federal or State government support for immigrants. Some locals were sympathetic, but there were no resources to ease settlement. Tensions and problems were exacerbated by the Great Depression, and this included racist taunting of 'foreign' children at school, resulting in Greek and Yugoslav children refusing to speak their native language (Parsons 1990, pp. 246-47). But the 1930s also saw the creation of ethnic clubs, such as the branch of the Yugoslav club 'Gubec Matija', later the Yugoslav Community Club, Mildura. Parsons writes that a turning point in relations occurred in the late 1930s after

the Yugoslav community built its own meeting hall, which was also used by other people in Mildura, for local dances, and for the annual hospital benefit function.

- Sharing of public space, and the generosity of newcomers, thus contributed to improved intercultural relations, suggesting an important theme in understanding social cohesion. We have asked people in our initial interviews whether there are particular places where different cultural groups are more likely to interact, and suggestions from community members and other key informants in Mildura included local Bingo nights at the RSL Club, the sporting fields (especially Australian Rules Football and Rugby) and some of the local Christian churches, and the local public schools, where children and youth learn to get along and to mix with diverse others.

Parsons explains that relations gradually improved between Mildura locals and diverse newcomers after World War II, with new waves of immigrants coming in. This period also saw the creation of important ethnic clubs and associations, the setting up of a Greek school, the creation of public halls that served ethnic communities, and later explicitly multicultural associations, and greater involvement of people from different migrant backgrounds in local life and affairs. Though there were inter-ethnic tensions, Parsons quotes from a local Greek migrant who noted that significant Greek involvement as ‘blockies’ meant greater acceptance amongst other ‘blockies’. Parsons also cites examples of Greek pickers introducing new skills to their employers, such as methods for cold dipping dried fruits that produced higher quality product. Italians, by contrast, who mixed more as workers, were more likely to be involved in fights with other workers in town (Parsons 1990, pp. 229-32). Italians, Parsons notes, arrived as itinerant workers in the 1920s and 1930s, and had no experience of working collectively on fruit blocks, so were not as involved in small block farming in Mildura as were the Greeks. Some also suffered internment as enemy aliens during World War II. But later, Italian migrants did become important local fruit growers. Turkish people only started arriving in the early 1970s, mainly attracted by work in the dried fruit industry, and by the mid-1970s some families had managed to buy their own blocks (Parsons 1990, p. 251). Many arrived in Australia without being able to speak English, and language barriers were a major problem, including for finding anything beyond the most menial work. When Turkish families did manage to buy land, some locals suspected that they did this through profit from illegal activities like drug cultivation and trafficking (Parsons 1990, p. 253); this was one of the widespread prejudices that Turkish migrants to the area were commonly confronted with, as recorded in local interview-based memoirs such as *The Struggle*, and in Parsons’ own

interviews for the book (Parsons 1990, p. 254). The Turkish people had already created their own clubs by the 1980s, and opened their own Mosque in 1984. In 1980 the local radio station 3MA invited local ethnic communities to broadcast in their own languages (Parsons 1990, p. 250), and the first Yugoslav broadcasts occurred that year.

After a severe hailstorm affected migrants, especially of Turkish origin (Parsons 1990, p. 240), whose crops were destroyed, the Mildura Shire Council formed the Sunraysia Ethnic Advisory Council in 1977 which became later the Sunraysia Ethnic Communities Council Incorporated (SECC) in 1988, reflecting the fact that it had moved beyond an advisory role. (This later became the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council [SMECC]). The SECC took on many roles, including looking after communities' needs, employing welfare workers, running local radio programs, advocating for the establishment of SBS television in Mildura, and organising and running important celebratory events.

Parsons writes that in response to new Commonwealth legislation, a group of women from the Mildura area, who had been attending English classes, set up the Multicultural Women's Association of Sunraysia in 1985 aimed at promoting greater migrant participation, and encouraging women to learn English. The women from this association were responsible for a large survey of foreign born women in the Sunraysia district, that revealed that it was an aging population, and that there were issues of disconnection with the mainstream community, isolation and loneliness, and low levels of English language skill.

Jennifer Hamilton-McKenzie's (2010) unpublished PhD thesis *California Dreaming* mainly deals with Alfred Deakin, the Chaffey brothers and the setting up of Mildura as a town, the development of irrigation, and the early collapse of utopian visions for Mildura in the face of harsh reality and settlers' anger and disillusionment with the Chaffey brothers. It deals extensively with the Chaffey's *The Red Book*, distributed in 1889, and related efforts to establish the irrigation colony at Mildura, including attracting particular types of British immigrants (the independent yeoman farmer), and the Royal Commission into the colony in 1896. This history involves a critique of the white racial imaginary that, she argues, was a major shaping force for the 'productivist' ways that the land and water were understood and used by settlers. It provides an account of the utopian thinking that influenced the original plans for Mildura by the Chaffey brothers. It notes that the Temperance movement in Victoria had an influence on the desire among some to create Mildura as a temperance town,

and that such ideas influenced the social geography of the town, including the absence of pubs and the growth of clubs that catered to the different social classes.

- One key informant from Mildura suggested that the utopian vision of creating something great in Mildura has lived on as a cast of mind that inspires local cultural and business entrepreneurs including restaurateur and Mildura Brewery co-owner Stefano De Pieri, and Ross Lake, owner of Mildura based fuel distribution company Tasco Petroleum.

Shepparton

Several Shepparton and regional Victorian histories were surveyed, including Raymond West's (1962) *Those Were the Days* which is mainly a series of snapshots about colourful figures and events across the town's history, up to the end of the 1960s. It does, however, include insights about and depictions of local Aboriginal communities and the way they lived, including the Bangerang. Like the older histories mentioned previously in the section on Mildura, the account ends with an item titled 'An Ancient Race Disappears' (Item 10 in West 1962, pp. 17-18) after which the Aboriginal presence in the Shepparton area is no longer mentioned or apparently considered irrelevant to the history and development of the area.

Tony Dingle's (1984) *The Victorians: Settling* is an excellent history of nineteenth and early twentieth century settlement in Victoria, and includes some material on Shepparton and Mildura, in particular a chapter on irrigation, the closer selection acts of the 1860s and onwards, and the expansion of agriculture in the Goulburn Valley and the Mallee, that have been so crucial to the development of the multicultural farming communities in these areas, as stressed by other more Shepparton and Mildura focused histories.

Two histories of Shepparton, Ron Michael's (1988) book *On McGuire's Punt: A profile of Shepparton from Squatting to Solar City 1838-1988*, and the shorter *The City of Greater Shepparton Heritage Study II Thematic Environmental History, Vol II* (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004) provide accounts of the historical setting up of Shepparton, and its economic, social and cultural development across time, including the central themes of settlement and migration. Both highlight the ongoing significance of multi-ethnic migration to Shepparton's social landscape and economic success, and argue that Shepparton has been

mostly successful in integrating waves of migrants into the Greater Shepparton area. The central importance of irrigation, horticulture and economic opportunities for these successful migration histories are stressed.

The modern town of Shepparton began as a sheep station in the late 1830s and then as a small settlement associated with a river crossing ('McGuire's Punt') on the Goulburn River in the early 1850s for people travelling to the Bendigo and Ballarat goldfields. The town is named after Sherbourne Sheppard, an early land holder. It was originally known as Sheppardstown, and officially became Shepparton in 1860 (Michael 1988, p. 6). There were fewer than thirty squatters in the area up until the late 1860s (Michael 1988, p. 15). The large sheep runs were a feature of the area up until the 1880s and 1890s when, after a series of new land acts (including selection acts and closer settlement acts, from the 1860s onward), the land that had been opened up and cleared proved useful for wheat, fruit and vines (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004; Michael 1988, Ch.2; Dingle 1984). The early pastoralists and horticulturalists were mainly of British backgrounds. At the end of World War I, small blocks were created under the *Discharged Soldier Settlement Act* of 1917, and this greatly increased the production of canned fruit (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004). Subsequent soldier settlements after World War II added to these small holdings.

Transport developments increased the growth of the towns of Shepparton and Mooroopna, such as the railways from the 1860s, and Shepparton and Mooroopna becoming important stopovers for the Echuca paddlesteamer in the 1870s and 1880s. By that stage Shepparton had become a much more established town (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004). There was important growth and development in the early 1900s, with the establishment of large scale irrigation. Irrigation had developed in the 1880s and 1890s, with important innovations from local farmers, including a local man who travelled from Ardmona (near Shepparton) to California to study irrigation schemes there; but there was important, and costly expansion of irrigation in the Shepparton district in 1910, with a major financial contribution from the Victorian state government (Michael 1988, p. 25, and Ch. 4); and irrigation remains a vital feature of Shepparton's agricultural system (for example, there was another major State and Federal government improvement initiative for the Goulburn Valley irrigation system in 2008, reflecting how important the Goulburn Valley is to Victorian and Australian food production).

Shepparton and the area continued to grow in the interwar years, a period when many dairy farms and orchards were established, and some of these were bought or established by recent European migrants. Then there was even more significant growth and development during and after the Second World War, which also included further important migrations.

Multi-ethnic migration was an important feature of Greater Shepparton's earlier history. For example, Chinese migrants attracted by Victoria's 1850s gold rushes also settled near Tatura where they created market gardens (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004, p. 33). From 1913 immigrants arrived from Palestine, and Jews arrived from Russia just prior to the outbreak of the First World War, establishing a farming settlement at Shepparton East. Michael argues that this Jewish 'colony' was probably the 'first significant ethnic transplant' in the Shepparton area (Michael 1988, p. 59). Prominent Jewish members of that Jewish settlement history include the late Richard Pratt, who headed Visy. Though the settlement disbanded, and many moved away, some prominent names including the Feiglans and Gorrs remained in the area (Michael 1988, p. 127). In the 1930s Albanians and Greeks arrived in the area, established orchards and contributed greatly to fruit growing and canning. Several of these families went on to be very successful orchardists and business people in Shepparton, including the Zurcases who changed the face of hospitality and nightclub entertainment in Shepparton. Haset Sali, the son of pioneering Albanian orchardist Sabri Sali (who migrated to Shepparton in 1930), was Chairman of Directors of SPC, and another son Hismet was one of Shepparton's most successful businessmen (Michael 1988, p. 128). Other prominent migrant families included the Avrams. John Avram, the son of a Greek migrant, became in the 1980s one of Australia's most successful hoteliers (Michael 1988, pp. 101-102). The availability of relatively cheap land, and the opportunity to engage in less capital intensive tomato farming before expanding into fruit growing and dairying, were important factors allowing such successful settlement of migrants, who soon established themselves as families whose sons and daughters proceeded to other successful professional and business careers in Shepparton and beyond (Michael 1988).

Of note also are the forced migrations of Germans and Italians who were interned near Shepparton during World War II, at internment camps at Tatura and Murchison, chosen as sites because of the area's plentiful supply of food and water. These included thousands of German and Italian prisoners of war from North Africa and the Middle East, as well as detained 'enemy aliens' from Australia, representing 23 different nationalities (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004, p. 35; Michael 1988, pp. 61-2). As Michael notes, some of the 'Dunera

men', for example Templers and Germans from Iran, were allowed to remain in Australia after the war, and made major contributions to Australian life. Some prisoners of war who had been repatriated returned to Australia with their families as immigrants, settling in the Goulburn Valley, suggesting that even in times of war local kindness, including from local school teachers, extended to internees (Michael 1988, p. 63). Some 'Dunera men' were 'allowed to volunteer as fruit-pickers in the Shepparton area', and many were later able to enlist in the 8th Australian Employment Company, including Henry Mayer who became a leading Australian political scientist (Michael 1988, p. 65).

Italians and Yugoslavs arrived in relatively large numbers during and after World War II, along with Greeks, Albanians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Macedonians. Some of these families became important, and wealthy, orchardists, and the owners of local small businesses, such as pubs, hotels and nightclubs, clothing stores, restaurants and cafes. By 1981, statistics reveal that 11.5% of Shepparton's population was born overseas, and a third of these in Italy, who represented a large ethnic minority when their Australian born children were added (Michael 1988, p. 129). The Italian influence has been marked in Shepparton, including through the craft work of Italian builders giving a particular architectural style to Shepparton's buildings and houses (Michael 1988, p. 129). In the late 1980s 40% of Greater Shepparton's population had non Anglo-Celtic names (Michael 1988, p. 153). In the mid 1970s the Shepparton City Council committed to establishing an 'International Village' as a major tourist attraction celebrating Shepparton's multicultural history. After much initial optimism and public commitment from the Victorian state government, Shepparton City Council, and the Shepparton Rotary Club (that assumed leadership of the project), and the initial establishment of several buildings and gardens, the enterprise eventually foundered due to lack of sufficient funding and lack of local commitment, including from local immigrant communities (Michael 1988, pp. 117-20). However, the very attempt at such an ambitious project illustrates how much Shepparton's leaders and residents already recognized, by the early 1970s, the important contribution that multi-ethnic immigration had made to Shepparton. In the words of the Mayor, Cr. Riordan, at the time, 'The Village would create an outstanding tourist attraction and would indicate Shepparton's appreciation of the contribution made to our way of life by new Australians' (quoted in Michael 1988, p. 118).

- Many of the key informants we have spoken to so far in Shepparton and Mildura when asked questions about the multicultural fabric of the towns, and whether and

how it has been successful, have stressed the success of those historical migrations. The historical memory of successful migrations, and the ways that this memory is often rehearsed in everyday life in the towns, is one of the important success factors for intercultural relations. It also enables people to imagine that the more recent migrations, even if there are difficulties at present, including difficulties of adjustment and cultural understanding on the part of both long-standing locals (including the long-established mainly European immigrant groups) and new 'very culturally different' arrivals, will also be successful, given time, as stressed by key informant Peter Byrne, President of the SMECC Board in Mildura.

3) The Impact of Recent Migrations to Shepparton and Mildura

Though the emphasis of this project extends beyond migration and ethnicity, including long-established Anglo-Celtic and Indigenous communities and how they fit into the broader social cohesion and multicultural scenes, migrations of people from non-English speaking backgrounds have obviously profoundly reshaped the cultural diversity of some rural areas (Forrest and Dunn 2013), including Shepparton and Mildura over a long historical period (as explained in the previous section). More recently, with unskilled and semi-skilled industries, a strong horticultural base, and education, health and welfare industries that attract and seek to retain multi-ethnic, highly skilled professionals, the Shepparton and Mildura areas have become magnets for immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, and people on temporary worker visas, apart from highly skilled professionals. Also, inspired by labour shortages and population decline, since the late 1990s government policies have directed immigrants to regional and rural areas (Collins and Krivokapic-Skoko 2009); and since 2003-4 there have been specific government programs directing humanitarian/refugee immigrants to rural and regional Australia (McDonald et al 2008), including Shepparton and Mildura. This has resulted in rapid transformations of the ethnic composition of Shepparton and Mildura, with implications for ongoing social cohesion. The older Anglo-Celtic and Indigenous inhabitants, and older, primarily European, established immigrant groups now live alongside immigrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. In some rural areas, these developments have resulted in tensions around issues including the building of Mosques in previously Christian dominated towns and areas and the changing nature of shopping spaces and uses of public space and facilities (as evident in Bendigo; see also Moran 2005). However, unlike Bendigo both Shepparton and Mildura have long established and new

Mosques and there have been no reported tensions surrounding their Mosques. As noted later in this literature review, there is some evidence of tension surrounding Muslims in Shepparton and Mildura (Lentini et al 2009; Lentini et al 2011; Markus 2014), but on the other hand, there are also long-established, well integrated and well-accepted Muslims in both Shepparton and Mildura (for example from Turkish and Albanian backgrounds).

Studies at other locations have found that longer settled locals have felt resentment about refugee and immigrant access to government services and funding, including the welfare benefits and services sought by disadvantaged individuals and families (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2008; Vasey and Manderson 2012). In our initial field trips and discussions at Shepparton and Mildura, we have sometimes heard such stories, or had such community resentments relayed to us by key agencies (i.e. SMECC in Mildura). However, the response to historical and recent migrations has also included innovative social entrepreneurship and community relationship-building. For example, there is evidence of the successful role of local communities in settling refugees at Shepparton and Mildura (McDonald et al 2008; Piper and Associates/DIC 2007; Nsubuga-Kyobe and Hazelman 2007; key informant interviews with Peter Byrne and Dean Wickham of SMECC in Mildura), and also examples of inter-faith dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Shepparton, often driven by non-government organizations and local community activists and brokers (Wise and Ali 2008; Shepparton Interfaith Network).

- Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the inequalities that threaten social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura, including how different immigrant statuses enable or limit access to employment and social services. Key informants in Mildura (i.e. from SMECC, La Trobe University, and Mallee Family Care) and Shepparton (GoTafe Multicultural Education Unit) have emphasised the employment difficulties resulting from people in some cases being on bridging visas that prevent them from working. This may also contribute to local perceptions that some recent immigrants are not prepared to work and contribute to the local community, instead relying on social benefits.

Shepparton has seen a large inflow of very ethnically diverse immigrants, including refugee populations from the Middle East (mainly Iraq and Afghanistan), and from Africa (mainly Congolese and Sudanese) (City of Greater Shepparton 2013). The Iraqi population is

especially significant, the result of a secondary and chain migration from the late 1990s, coming from other parts of Australia and attracted to Shepparton. According to reports from the Brotherhood of St Laurence in the mid 2000s, some of the reasons included: being attracted to a place with a reputation for multicultural tolerance; it was seen as a cheaper place to live; knowing that there were already Iraqi families established there; availability of Arabic speaking services; the attraction of smaller towns, with clean air and space etc.; and agricultural work (Taylor and Stanovic 2005). It is estimated that by 2013 there were about 300 families (3000-4000 people) from Iraq in the Greater Shepparton area, and another 70 families (about 300-400 people) from Iraq in Cobram, 70 kilometres to the north of Shepparton (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2013a). Some of the Iraqis in Shepparton are highly skilled professionals – including doctors, engineers, teachers, and scientists – but many faced barriers in finding employment, including the trauma suffered as refugees, and particularly for the older generations, language barriers due to limited English. Other issues include social isolation, especially for women, issues of intergenerational tension (over the cultural adaptations of the younger generations), health and well-being, access to good housing, long term unemployment and poverty, and difficulties acquiring citizenship (sometimes related to lack of English proficiency) (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2013a).

According to an article in *The Age* from 2010, there were about 700 Afghans living in Shepparton at that time; a local Iraqi was quoted as saying that people in detention centres were talking about getting to Shepparton: ‘Adnan Al Ghazal, originally an Iraqi refugee, says the central Victorian city's reputation as a haven of tolerance and prosperity is such that many people have it as their target before they leave home countries. "People are talking about Shepparton in detention centres. It's known everywhere," Mr Al Ghazal said’ (Strong 2010). Another story published in *New Matilda* in 2013 also quoted Afghans in Shepparton talking about the place as very friendly and welcoming. It quoted 2011 Census figures of 557 Afghans living in the Greater Shepparton district, but noted that Shepparton’s Ethnic Council estimates were of a much larger community, as high as 1200 (Bird 2013). The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District estimated in its updated community profile from 2013 that there were 120 Afghani families and 350 single Afghani men, totalling about 1200 Afghani people living in Shepparton. The migration of Afghans began around 2005, with men coming first to pick fruit in the district. It was estimated that about 50% of Shepparton’s Afghans had arrived by boat in Australia and had experienced detention. Though a few are highly

educated, many have little education because of limited opportunities in the rural areas of Afghanistan from which they came, and/or because of conflict and disruption to schooling. While about 70% could speak some English, few were able to read or write English. Many Afghan men were employed as unskilled farm labourers. Afghanis in Shepparton face many barriers, including problems of illiteracy in their first language that is mainly Hazaragi, and in English. Access to mainstream services is limited, in part by language barriers, and there are great burdens placed on literate Afghanis and those who speak, read and write well in English. Women in particular face issues of isolation, often not socialising outside of their homes. As for the Iraqis in Shepparton, Afghanis experience intergenerational conflict, including that based on fears that their children are moving away from their culture and traditions (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2013b; Key Police Informants, Shepparton).

Congolese families first came to Shepparton in the mid 2000s as part of a pilot Humanitarian refugee resettlement program (Nsubuga-Kyobe and Hazelman 2007). They were mainly Christian, and were supported in their resettlement by Local Council, a Committee, the churches and parishioners (according to the Goulburn Valley Congolese Community website <http://gvcongolesecommunity.weebly.com/settlement.html>). As of 2013, there were about 160 Congolese people living in Shepparton, in 23 families (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2013c). But the Sudanese immigration is also significant, and quite recent. Most of the people (more than two thirds) come from Southern Sudan. The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, in their community profile, describes the dimensions of this flow as follows:

The Sudanese community in Shepparton began to establish from mid-2006 through secondary migration. Shepparton offered seasonal work in agriculture, which many took up while others felt that city life was too busy and came to Shepparton in search for a quieter place to live. In July 2007 there were estimated to be 15 Sudanese families (80 to 90 people) living in the Shepparton area. By March 2008 this estimate had grown to 38 families, comprising of 38 women, 37 men, 194 children and 20 eighteen years+ young people, totalling 284 individuals. In May 2010 the number of Sudanese living in Shepparton was estimated to be approximately 700. In June 2013 the Sudanese community in Shepparton comprises 130 families totalling approximately 1000 people (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2013d).

The community has issues with transience as people move backwards and forwards between Melbourne, Sydney and Shepparton.

Mildura has also had recent inflows of refugees and asylum seekers from places including Afghanistan, Africa, Sri Lanka and Iran, and has become, like Shepparton, one of Victoria's main sites for regional refugee resettlement (AMES 2014). As noted earlier, similar to Shepparton, it has historically attracted European immigrants (including from Italy, Greece, Germany, Croatia, Yugoslavia and Turkey), especially for its agriculture, and, so it has a long history of dealing with diversities. Its grape producing and other fruit industries, and almond production (Mildura and Swan Hill regions produce 65% of Australia's almonds, see Mildura Development Corporation 2009) continue to attract ethnically diverse immigrants, including from Asia and Polynesia. Its health care industry attracts significant numbers of skilled professionals, including from Asia, but there are issues of retaining staff beyond the first few years. Mildura and its region have well-established Samoan and Tongan communities (from the 1960s onward), and there are particular issues around employment and access to health and other services that confront those communities, including issues that emerge from visa statuses (including overstayers, as noted in researchers' discussion at SMECC). Mildura's Muslim population has grown recently, with new arrivals from Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s, though the percentages (Mildura 1.8%, Shepparton 4.9% Muslim background) are not as high as for Shepparton (City of Greater Shepparton 2013; Mildura Rural City Council Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2012-2017; Mildura Rural City Council 2008).

In a 2010 paper on CALD settlement and educational opportunities in the Loddon Mallee Region, it was noted that Mildura had recent Sudanese migrants who, according to SMECC feedback, were 'attracted to Mildura's climate, the good English language school for their children and affordable housing' (Newcombe and Achren 2010, p. 1). Afghan refugees had also recently arrived in Mildura, with the first wave mainly from Christmas Island detention centre (Newcombe and Achren 2010, p. 1). New arrivals in the Mildura area between 2005 and 2011 included 1000 overseas arrivals. These included new arrivals from India (14% of arrivals), Afghanistan (11.1%), England (8.1%), New Zealand (5.7%), the Philippines (5.5%), Iraq (3.2%), Sri Lanka (3.2%), South Africa (3.1%) and China (2.5%). Islam was the religion of 20% of new arrivals, associated with the large number of arrivals from Afghanistan and Iraq (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 30). The Mildura Rural City Council noted in their 'Community Health and well-

Being Plan 2013-2017' that Mildura LGA had a high level of diversity, with 'an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of nearly 4%', which was 'the second highest in the state'. Mildura LGA had 10.8% of its residents born overseas. Mildura had 'over 50 ethnicities', and though immigration to the area was lower than the Victorian average as a whole, 'over half (51.7%) of new settlers arrive on humanitarian visas, the highest in the state' (Mildura Rural City Council 2013, p. 22).

The most recent Social Indicators Report for Mildura (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012) noted that the Mildura LGA has had a fairly consistent proportion of its population born in Australia between 2001 and 2011, with about 84.2% born in Australia. Mildura itself was the most culturally diverse community within the Mildura LGA, with 80.7% born in Australia (19.3% of residents born overseas), as of 2011. However, this is still well below the Victoria and Melbourne proximate percentage of 37% of residents born overseas (and 63% born in Australia). Notably, Robinvale's population are 36.6% born overseas, with higher numbers of migrants coming from Tonga, Vietnam, New Zealand and Thailand (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 8). These numbers present a picture of Mildura as a community where the cultural diversity may be somewhat visible, but it is significantly lower than the state average.

- A question we have regarding these numbers is what proportion of the 84.2% of people born in Australia were born to the families of the 19.3% of the population born overseas? The report indicates that the population of young families has increased, so we wonder whether there is a correlation between newer, migrant residents, young families, and some of the residents who were born in Australia but who may identify strongly with their parents' culture/country of origin.

As for Shepparton, there are economic opportunities in Mildura, and areas of economic growth (for example in renewable energies, see Mildura Development Corporation website, <http://www.milduradevelopment.net.au/News-and-Events/Fact-Sheets.aspx>) – it was stressed at La Trobe University RFA Transforming Human Societies travelling workshop (June 2014) that migrants have always been attracted to Mildura for opportunities. It has been reported, however, that some of this unskilled and semiskilled agricultural and factory work is becoming less available for migrants, ““already tied up or given to backpackers””, and that 'many CALD settlers are either unwilling or unable to work in some areas of traditional farm

work because of the employment practices of contract labour companies who pay low wages and bring in workers, including backpackers, to stay in boarding houses' (Newcombe and Achren 2010, p. 1, quoting and paraphrasing comments from SMECC, Mildura Rural City Council and Swan Hill Rural City Council). 'There is a danger', it was argued, 'that migrant communities will become further marginalised as a result of ongoing unemployment' (Newcombe and Achren 2010, p. 1). Mildura faces similar issues to Shepparton, including: matching local skills, including those of recent migrants, with local employment opportunities (Dean Wickham of SMECC, and members at the Regional Advisory Council meeting in Shepparton, 21/05/15, noted the lack of proactive, culturally aware and attuned labour hire firms and JobNetwork agencies operating in Shepparton and Mildura); possible unofficial discrimination, and everyday discrimination and racism, affecting people's employment opportunities and opportunities to participate in local Mildura life; and convincing high skilled immigrants to stay, by creating more inclusive environments for diverse families. Also as for Shepparton, economic and social disadvantages are important features of the context in which multicultural relations are experienced in Mildura; and there are serious forms of entrenched disadvantage, experienced not only by, but particularly among, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders, Tongans and Samoans, and recent refugee groups.

- The evidence thus far shows that, at least for first generation humanitarian/refugee settlers in rural areas there is considerable, entrenched disadvantage including welfare dependency (Vasey and Manderson 2012) – and this research will investigate how this is experienced and perceived within Shepparton and Mildura. The successful harnessing of diversity has been a central plank of multicultural policy since the late 1980s (for example through the economic efficiency and productive diversity agendas), and remains crucial to Australia's future economic, social and cultural success, as pointed out in the *Demographic Change and Liveability Panel Report* commissioned by the Federal government for its Population Inquiry (Hugo 2010; see also Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW 2011). The success of Australia's immigration program is vital to Australia's future, and the social inclusion and increased equality of people from non-English speaking backgrounds is a vital part of that success, as emphasized in the above-mentioned federal government report (Hugo 2010).

- As social inequalities have a strong impact on social cohesion, this research will investigate experiences of inequality in Shepparton and Mildura, from the perspectives of immigrant individuals, families and communities, and also from the perspectives of non-immigrants (i.e. town locals). There has been survey and interview based research on experiences of immigrant (including refugee) settlement in rural Australia, addressing relations between older town locals and newer residents, and locals' perceptions of different immigrant groups, as well as highlighting factors that shape successful immigrant settlement in rural towns (Collins 2012; McDonald et al 2008). But an intensive, ethnographic study of everyday negotiations of diversity, and its implications for social cohesion, is vital for the understanding of the problems and possibilities faced by people living in rural Australia. In the context of rapid change, including increased, complex diversities, not only immigrants but locally born people are required to change and to develop new forms of cultural competence and new capacities for interaction (see Wise 2007; Noble 2009; Wessendorf 2011)– and these competencies and capacities are an important focus of this research. Australian governments are increasingly committed to settling immigrants in rural/regional areas (FECCA 2010), and this research will investigate some of the results of these key policies.

4) Research Literature on Integration of Immigrants in Rural Areas

In this section, we consider research about the key integrative processes important for recent immigrants to regional areas. As Shepparton and Mildura both have large numbers of recent immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, this literature is very relevant to understanding key success factors for social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura, in particular indicating the necessary institutions and processes that facilitate the ongoing success of migration to rural areas. These include 'meso level organisations' and also the important role of employers.

Kilpatrick et al (2013) offer a case study based (Geelong) overview of the role meso-level organisations and community groups (governmental and non) play in the development of migrants' social capital for settlement and quality of life in regional Australian cities. Their findings suggest that the micro-level interactions facilitated by mid-level organisations and groups (such as schools, churches, NGOs, workplaces) are vital for the sorts of 'bridging

capital' that links migrants to other parts of the social fabric, strengthening their opportunities for employment, social connections, and quality of life. Kilpatrick et al. conceptualise the relationships between individuals, organisations, and the greater society in terms of a 'primary social contract', in which the migrant is obliged to participate and the new community is obliged to make a welcome opportunity for them to do so. Failure of a community to find ways to invite and integrate new populations means that it is more likely to find it is unable to retain migrants. Mid, or meso-level, organisations are key players in the development and maintenance of this 'primary social contract'. Given the high cost (to individuals, cities, and the government) of migration, understanding the role of these mid-level organisations is vital for maintaining migrant communities in the regions (Kilpatrick et al 2013, p. 4).

In their review of the literature, Kilpatrick et al. note several things relevant to our research:

Many new migrants, and particularly their families, lack social networks in their new location; those with stronger social connections are healthier and are more likely to remain in their new location (Kilpatrick et al., 2011; Le and Kilpatrick, 2008; McMichael and Manderson, 2004; Zhao et al., 2010). It follows that attracting migrants is not sufficient; the social capacity of regional cities to facilitate the social inclusion of migrants by assisting them to make social connections is very important to the retention of migrants and the success of regional migration policies (Kilpatrick et al 2013, p. 2).

Stone and Hughes (2001) argue that while there are high levels of bonding social capital (within groups) in regional Australia, there are insufficient stocks of cross-cutting ties (bridging connections to people who are different, as well as to institutions of power) (Kilpatrick et al 2013, pp. 3-4).

Kilpatrick et al. base their conclusions on qualitative research with migrants and leaders of community groups and organisations, and sought to investigate 'how outsiders are incorporated into the Geelong community and how policy makers, community groups and planners work to effect connections between bonding and bridging groups' (Kilpatrick et al 2013, p. 5). The following are some of their notable findings. Although Geelong is 'rich in social networks', many newer migrants found these difficult to access, particularly for single men (Kilpatrick et al 2013, p. 6). Many of the migrant participants viewed making connections as largely their own responsibility, no matter how successful or not they were at it. The various 'bridging institutions' saw their organisational purpose as directly to facilitate

and initiate social contacts for new migrants. Churches and workplaces proved to be common sources of social bonding capital, as were the connections that came through children at school (Kilpatrick et al 2013, p. 7). However, many of the social connections were with fellow newer migrants of various backgrounds (bonding capital), rather than with longer-term residents. Migrants who were employed with the help of ‘The Skilled Migration program, Development Committee, NGO’ and another agency were assisted in developing bridging capital for social activity and work connections. The self-employed and small business owners did not, however, benefit from these ‘bridges’ and tended to be limited to their own employees or other social networks (Kilpatrick et al 2013, p. 8).

In a recent article Boese (2014) analyses the various intersecting roles employers play in the settlement process for recently arrived migrants and refugees in regional Australia. She uses interviews from migrants and refugees as well as employers, data from a larger project on rural and regional settlement, to illustrate the need for an understanding of the interaction of ‘the regulation of settlement, implementation of settlement assistance and the ways in which employers’ attitudes and demand for labour are shaping the settlement experiences of recent arrivals’ (Boese 2014, p. 13). The article is concerned particularly with employment of skilled migrants, but makes a compelling case that issues of employment significantly affect all aspects of settlement. Her findings suggest employers are a vital bridge for social capital for recently arrived migrants and refugees. Boese points out that most sociological research literature in Australia focuses on metropolitan areas (especially Sydney and Melbourne), partly because, until recently, the majority of new settlement has been to metropolitan cities. Citing Hugo (2011, p. 152), Boese (2014, p. 2) writes that ‘demographers have highlighted that “for the first time during the post-war era the growth of immigrant populations has been greater outside of gateway cities than in them”’.

Boese notes that research on regional settlement tends to focus on refugees, suggesting the need for further research on other migrant groups and settlement in the regions.

- For our purposes, this suggests the importance of further research on settlement amongst migrants as an important part of social cohesion.

Boese offers a very useful overview of literature on key factors necessary for ‘successful settlement’, all pointing toward the importance of employment as a central part of that success. The issues raised by Boese are reminiscent of the measures of Jenson’s social cohesion framework. *Employers play a crucial role for recently settled migrants and refugees*

in negotiating inclusion into the regional social fabric, and therefore may be seen as critical players in questions of social cohesion in multicultural regional cities such as Shepparton and Mildura. The primary factors include:

...adequate infrastructure and planning to resettle sufficient numbers to make the locale viable in both human and economic terms; availability of secure and affordable housing; access to adequate employment opportunities; supportive attitudes and environment in the local community; presence of appropriate cultural and religious support; and commitment to involving refugee communities in the design and development of resettlement programs. Additional factors that have been identified as critical in the settlement of humanitarian entrants regardless of location are adequate health-care provisions, English-language training, access to transportation, and familiarisation with life skills such as financial management (Shepley, 2007). Freedom from discrimination and violence is also central to both refugees' and migrants' settlement outcomes, given their negative impact on health, wellbeing and access to education and employment, documented and discussed in a growing body of research (Boese 2014, p. 3).

Additionally, Boese reviews literature on the importance of social connections and social capital. Particularly noteworthy is the argument that meso-level organisations, 'such as NGOs, churches and workplaces have been critical in linking migrants with longer-term residents (Kilpatrick et al., 2013)', and that 'Employers are identified as potential sources of social connections in and beyond the workplace in the wider community (Kilpatrick et al., 2011, 2013)' (Boese 2014, p. 3).

Boese also provides a useful overview of the 'regulation of regional migration and settlement of overseas-born migrants', including government reports and policies (Boese 2014, p. 4). The Australian government has been relatively adept at supporting newly arrived migrants especially since the 1978 *Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants*, however skilled migrants do not receive any support services, barring information on settlement (Boese 2014, p. 4). Boese used interview data with migrants and employers to investigate how newly arrived migrants negotiate this lack of settlement assistance, finding that employers assisted in the myriad foreseeable and unforeseeable settlement needs. The research shows that employers played these significant roles in particular: '(1) attractor to the regional location; (2) provider of settlement support; (3) host and cultural ambassador; (4)

determinant of current and future residency; (5) perpetrator of discrimination or exploitation’ (Boese 2014, p. 7), this last indicator acknowledging the sometimes nefarious role an employer may play.

Employers were often the ‘first port of call’ for migrants (including skilled, refugee and humanitarian visa holders), in diverse situations from knowledge of how and where to access further resources/departments, to emergency contacts, negotiating relationships with other locals, and other day-to-day assistance (Boese 2014, p. 8). The migrants interviewed indicated a great amount of trust in their employers, both out of gratitude and out of necessity, for their employers were often the only contact to the rest of the community (Boese 2014, p. 9). Their findings also turned up cases of racism, much of which stemmed from ‘ignorance rather than malice’, but contributed to maintaining inequality (Boese 2014, p. 10). An example includes interviewees having a sense of a ‘glass ceiling’, facing discrimination from jobs because ‘supervisors or employer lacked confidence in their skills or mistrusted their integrity’ because they were from a different ethnic background (Boese 2014, p. 10).

Missingham et al (2006) offer a synthesis primarily of social science research on ethnic minority settlement in regional Australia. They suggest this literature is very limited with much of the existing research on rural Australian migrant communities coming from the ‘grey literature’ of government and policy networks. While there are patterns suggestive of ‘an emerging social science of ethnic minorities in rural Australia’ (Missingham et al 2006, p. 131), it is marginal within Australian social science and is mostly not linked with ‘broader theoretical discussions within the study of migration on the one hand or rural societies on the other’ (Missingham et al 2006, p. 132). Missingham et al suggest a review of this emerging literature is valuable for 1) combating the myth that rural Australia is not multicultural, 2) contributing to debates about environmental concerns and population growth, and 3) offering perspectives on policies that encourage rural immigration (Missingham et al 2006, p. 132). Missingham et al (2006) conclude with a recommendation for ‘social capital’ as a useful theoretical approach to understanding these and other issues around rural immigrant communities.

To provide context, the authors explain research that shows non-English speaking background groups are concentrated in particular regions and cities, especially around horticultural markets. This is important to understand for popular imaginations of rural

Australia as well as policy considerations. The authors cite examples such as The Northern Irrigation Region of Victoria (where they conducted their own research [Missingham et al 2004]) as an example of what Burnley (2001 p. 69, cited in Missingham et al 2006, p. 133) refers to as 'cultural islands' that offer greater diversity in contributing to a rural area. Missingham et al (2004, p. 29) report that as of 2001 '40 percent of horticulturalists in the Goulburn Valley, and 33 percent of horticulturalists in Sunraysia, reported that they spoke a language other than English at home'.

Missingham et al (2006) outline a pattern in the literature of describing the settlement process either in terms of cultural continuity or social exclusion. Historians (such as Charles Price and Robert Pascoe) have done work to explore the connections between types of land/places of settlement and migrants' homelands (cultural continuity), as well as the tendency for migrants to attract further migrants through family and social networks (chain migration). While these historical interpretations offer a compelling account of settlement choice, more critical analysts suggest settlement choices are shaped largely by socio-political-economic factors that are linked to social exclusion. Researchers like Collins et al (1995) 'argue that settlement decisions have arisen from structural changes in the wider economy and from constraints on economic opportunities and social mobility resulting from processes of racism' (Missingham et al 2006, p. 135). Discrimination cannot be underestimated for its role in dictating working, living, and social options, and included such things as limitation to low pay and low status employment. Consequently, Collins argues, movement into small business (including small scale farming) is often an economic choice, rather than motivated simply by continuity with family occupation and/or landscape in the 'home country'. 'Ethnic groups', write Missingham et al (2006), 'enter a particular economic sector or niche when they possess a comparative advantage in the market (e.g. within ethnic enclaves), or when there are low barriers to entry such as low investment costs and low skill requirements', and this engagement with the economy is therefore 'a strategy to overcome structural discrimination and limited economic opportunities' (Missingham et al 2006, p.135).

Another pattern in the social science literature centres upon access to social services and resources. The consensus of this literature is that non-English speaking background (NESB) immigrants face inequalities in opportunities for accessing important social services and funding and have limited knowledge or connection to governmental structures or resources (Missingham et al 2006, p.137). This is linked to structural factors such as struggling rural

economies and sometimes insufficient resources, but also to obstructions to access such as racism and/or discrimination because of lack of English language skills. Missingham et al (2006) outline a notable discrepancy between the governmental drives, particularly since the early 2000s, to attract skilled migrants to regional areas, and the statistical reality that many skilled migrants move to urban areas, and unskilled move to the regional and rural areas. These unskilled migrants have some differing needs for services and access to these services. Rural shortages in labour have meant a growing 'undocumented' workforce who are fulfilling labour needs but who face even greater challenges in access to social services.

There is a small but notable body of social science literature addressing gender issues, particularly challenges faced by immigrant women. NESB women face multi-dimensional inequality, they are vital to the settlement process of families and communities (largely unacknowledged 'cultural custodians' (Vasta 1992, cited in Missingham et al 2006), but have few resources to deal with issues such as social isolation, sexism, and work exploitation. Numerous women in NESB communities may 'suffer a triple disadvantage as they face the issue of being female, NESB and rural in an Anglo Saxon, patriarchal environment' (Wilkinson 1998, p. 247, cited in Missingham et al 2006). Missingham et al (2006) found in their research in northern Victoria that women faced the 'double burden' of being responsible for all of the housework, plus additional paid labour, coupled with 'isolation on farms and from the English-speaking community' (Missingham et al 2006, p.140).

A fourth pattern in the literature is research on intergenerational mobility. The main finding of this literature is that prior to the 1970s second generation migrants were more likely to inherit and run the family horticultural business, and that since the 1970s second generation migrants are more likely to seek qualifications and careers in trades or professional work. The second generation no longer feels committed to the family horticultural work and much of this land ends up becoming available to newer immigrants. The more established migrant families have, since the 1970s, actively sought to encourage their children in education and training pathways. In northern Victoria, established families 'invest resources in education and social mobility for the second generation' (Missingham et al 2006, p. 141), and move away from farming. Farming practices and agricultural sustainability are significantly affected by these patterns in migrant family involvement in horticulture, but very little research has acknowledged this relationship or considered the importance of 'ethnic minority

farming practices, relationships with the land or knowledge of agricultural sustainability issues' (Missingham et al 2006, p. 141).

Missingham et al's ethnographic research of immigrant farmers and related communities in the Northern Irrigation Region (NIR) which includes Shepparton and Mildura, provides important data on, and analysis of, the experiences of larger immigrant farming groups from Italian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian and Punjabi-Indian backgrounds (Missingham et al 2004, Ch. 5). The report arising from this research, conducted in the early 2000s for the Victorian Department of Primary Industry (DPI), explains that there are high concentrations of farmers from NES backgrounds in areas including Shepparton and Mildura. As mentioned above, according to 2001 Census figures, they noted that at least 40% of horticulturalists in the Goulburn Valley, and 33% in Sunraysia spoke a language other than English at home but the authors conclude that Census data underestimates the numbers due to people from such backgrounds not filling out census forms, or leaving blank answers to ancestry and language spoken at home questions (Missingham et al 2004, p. 10).

The 'cultural islands' in rural areas (referred to above) came about through a combination of processes, experiences and circumstances. 'Chain migration' for example, played 'an important role in migrants' settlement and concentration in particular rural areas, resulting in extensive kinship and social networks underlying immigrant communities' (Missingham et al 2004, p. 27). The particular conditions and types of land available in the NIR have drawn waves of immigrants in search of opportunities:

The history of the development of irrigation settlements, and especially soldier settlement schemes, in the NIR resulted in a supply of cheap but poorly maintained or run down farms. Horticultural industries such as vegetable, fruit, and grape growing are also subject to economic cycles of boom and bust that ensure that farms regularly become available and land does not become too expensive' (Missingham et al 2004, p. 47).

The attraction of farming for migrants included the opportunity it gave to avoid racism and discrimination in other sectors (and lack of support, in the 1950s and 1960s, from the union movement), and the capacity to get away from low-paid and insecure work and itinerant lifestyles. The problem was that NESB small farmers, because of the size and type of farming, and the fact that some of them, especially later Turkish and Punjabi immigrants,

took up already relatively poor farming land with salinity and other problems, were especially vulnerable economically (Missingham et al 2004, p. 48).

Through focus groups, interviews, consultations and participant observation Missingham et al (2004) came to conclusions that are significant for this project. At the time, in 2004, they noted that many first generation immigrant farmers, even those who had lived in the areas of Mildura and Shepparton for 30 years or more, still lacked proficiency in English. This acted as a major barrier to participation in the broader community, and also hindered their engagement with and knowledge of government services. Though the Australian-born generations had proficient English skills, and were often bilingual, they frequently left farming and moved away from the areas (Missingham et al 2004, p. 10). Missingham et al concluded that the stated aims of Victoria's multicultural policies were not achieved for NESB people in the NIR. There was still a strong need for bilingual translation, that was often lacking in provision of government information and services. They noted that there was low participation of NESB farmers in DPI's farm extension programs. It was also noted that 'Managers and field officers based in the Goulburn Valley perceived that there was widespread suspicion of government agencies among some immigrant communities, and that they avoided getting involved in group-based programs or training' (Missingham et al 2004, p. 11). Missingham et al noted the importance of historical experiences of racism and discrimination, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, that still shaped the community formations in the present. The ethnic social networks were in part formed as defensive strategies in a hostile context, including suspicions of government agencies, and had contributed to the development of a strong 'ethos of independence' (Missingham et al 2004, p. 11). Commenting more generally on the literature on NES background migrants in rural areas, they argued that 'these studies also suggest that multicultural, and access and equity policies, have often not been effectively implemented in rural areas' (Missingham et al 2004, p. 18). As noted in Missingham et al (2006) (see above), migrant women farmers were often isolated and overburdened by domestic work and farm work, that also provided few opportunities to develop English language skills. Though the women have played a fundamental role in sustaining farming, they were only rarely engaged with bureaucracies, services and policy makers serving farmers (Missingham et al 2006, p. 12).

In the discussion of the five communities in the Shepparton and Mildura areas there were some commonalities of experience: the experience of the first migrants working hard in unskilled work, including fruit picking and farm labouring, saving up money to buy small farms that were often run-down remnants of earlier soldier settlement schemes; the importance of chain migration resulting in the building of extended families and strong community networks; transnational connections, particularly with places of origin, and trips back every few years for those families who could afford it; migrants' aspirations for the next generations to get educated and to have greater career prospects that had been blocked for them, because of low education, lack of marketable skills, and low English language proficiency, as well as the racism and discrimination they experienced; the prospect that there will be no sons (as it is typically sons) to pass the family farm onto, when children take up jobs in towns and cities; the desire to maintain cultural and religious traditions; the precariousness of these farmers because of the nature of the land they have bought, economic trends that mitigate against the success of small farms; and the huge burdens placed upon women as active farm workers and also in charge of most domestic household affairs, that also exacerbates their isolation on farms away from mainstream community life. The authors also note that: 'All of the immigrant communities profiled possessed active community associations and thriving social networks that demonstrated strong capacities for communication and organisation' (Missingham et al 2004, p. 66). One further point to note was that the families that Missingham et al spoke to from a Turkish background in Mildura, who had been there for 20 years or more, told the researchers that they had no friends or social contacts outside of the Turkish community (Missingham et al 2004, p. 63).

The Punjabi community experience is less addressed in other literature, and will be highlighted here. By the early 2000s there was a significant Punjabi community around Shepparton, with about 54 families in the Goulburn Valley region, and 12 families who owned and worked horticultural farms, mainly around Shepparton East. The initial migration began with two young Sikh agricultural labourers who moved to the Shepparton area in 1980, and later bought orchards there. Family and friends followed, and the community grew quickly from the 1980s, with local Punjabis playing an important settling role for incoming Punjabi migrants, often providing initial accommodation and help finding work. Many Punjabis came from rural and farming backgrounds. They have a reputation for being very hard workers, and the initial Punjabi farmers learnt a great deal from other immigrant farmers who they worked for or were neighbours of, who often also gave important marketing advice.

Missingham et al (2004) note that most Punjabi first generation immigrants have good spoken English, but are not literate in English and relied upon their teenage children to translate written material. The community formed the Punjabi Cultural Association as a vehicle for practising the Sikh religion, and it also facilitates the teaching of Punjabi language to the community's children.

- The Sikh community in Shepparton is an example of successful integration of a recent, non-European immigrant group. The Sikh Temple is celebrated in the local Shepparton newspapers, and has been a welcoming place for other Shepparton residents, according to a community informant, an elderly woman who described attending a community event there where she shared food prepared and served by Sikh men. Local Sikhs were a prominent presence at the 2015 Anzac Day events, including the local Anzac Day March, which one of us attended, and were prominently represented in the *Shepparton News* in the lead up to these events. The Sikh community provided funds for the food served on Anzac Day at the RSL, as they had also done for the recent 'Emerge at Twilight' multicultural festival.

5) Social Capital, Social Cohesion, Attitudes to Multiculturalism and Immigration, and Related Research on Shepparton and Mildura

Robert Putnam's (2000) concept of and arguments about social capital have been very influential among researchers writing about social cohesion, including in the Australian context. We have already discussed issues of social capital in relation to social cohesion in the more general literature on social cohesion, including the Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013) Report, and the Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion reports that use the concept of social capital within some of the dimensions of social cohesion. In this section we begin with some of the social capital research on Shepparton (we found no specific literature on social capital in Mildura).

Carrington and Marshall included Shepparton as one of the case studies in their large DIC commissioned report on *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration to Australia* (2007). A paper emerging from this report compared Greater Shepparton favourably with Toowoomba (Queensland), highlighting the extensive network of ethnic community organisations as being a key facilitator for the settlement of new arrivals, a network Toowoomba lacked by

comparison (Carrington and Marshall 2008). The paper focused on capacity to absorb ‘unlinked’ migrants (those who had no previous links with Australia, including humanitarian entrants), as part of Federal and State governments’ policy initiatives from the late 1990s to settle migrants in regional and rural Australia. Shepparton and Toowoomba had been specifically selected by DIAC because of their services, employment and housing opportunities, and welcoming environments, but the outcomes were different for migrants:

The empirical data reveals that the new settlers were easily absorbed into Greater Shepparton, with strongly positive outcomes for both migrants and established residents. By contrast, the integration process in Toowoomba has been more problematic with evident transitional difficulties on the part of both migrants and the host community (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 118).

Carrington and Marshall concluded that the greater levels of ‘bridging social capital’ in Shepparton were crucial to that success and difference of outcomes. They argued that Shepparton had strong bridging capital (which involved networks of connection between disparate groups contributing to trust and cooperation), while Toowoomba only had strong bonding capital among the locals, with very little of the bridging social capital required to integrate newcomers into the community. Immigrant communities in Shepparton, that had in many cases been established there for three or four generations, had set up associations and services that contributed to strong bonding capital among immigrant groups, who were able to provide considerable help in housing, employment and welfare for later immigrants. Such ethnic activity was a common feature of many Australian towns and cities, but what was different about Shepparton, they argued, was that these associations also provided bridging social capital: ‘What has been significantly different about the Shepparton experience is that early in the post war years relationships began to form, not only between the diverse ethnic groups within the region, but also between the ethnic groups and Australians of English background’ (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 122).

A major facilitating factor here was that Shepparton was an agricultural area that settled immigrants from farming backgrounds, who shared a commitment to farming and rural values, and who also had vital skills that were shared with more established residents. But the sharing of skills was mutual, as the migrants also had much to learn from established residents about local conditions and practices, which the authors support with evidence from interviews and focus groups. The establishment of food processing plants consolidated these forms of bridging social capital, with migrants an important source of seasonal labour at SPC,

Campbell Soups and Ardmona Fruit (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 123). The financial contribution of migrants to the area was a major factor in the way that they had been welcomed – they were vital to ongoing economic development, and widely seen as such across the community.

There was extensive volunteering in Shepparton to help with the settlement of new migrants, and the local media played an important role in writing favourably about local ethnic affairs. There were many social events and activities that celebrated Shepparton's social and cultural diversity.

The authors noted, however, that there had been some fraying at the peak level of ethnic organisation, with a considerable portion of Italians breaking away from the mainstream Ethnic Council (created in 1977) to form their own body in 1990, The Italian Services Advisory Council (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 124).

Carrington and Marshall called for greater development of 'institutional social capital', referring in this context to the capacities and actions of local government to provide a facilitating framework of administrative, fiscal, policy processes and actions to complement and interact with the broader 'community frameworks of interaction' (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 119), which they argued was necessary for provincial centres 'to evolve into vibrant, sustainable, multicultural communities' (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 118). In this respect, they noted that the links between the ethnic communities and Local Council were not very well established, with at the time of writing no Councillors from ethnic backgrounds, and little evidence in Council publications of services oriented to the needs of migrant groups, including newer communities (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 124). This situation has most likely changed considerably since the time of this article, influenced by the Council's partnership with VICHealth in the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) pilot, and as evident in Greater Shepparton Council creating the 'Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, 2012-2015' (discussed below).

Rob Hudson (2011) from the Brotherhood of St. Laurence has reported on social capital in Shepparton, compiling and discussing findings from government surveys of community well-being and related social indicators, and other sources indicating disadvantage and education performance. He paints a less rosy picture of Shepparton's levels of social capital than that presented by Carrington and Marshall. He framed his paper with a case study of a Shepparton soccer club whose members came from mainly Sudanese, Afghan, Iraqi and Congolese

backgrounds. The disadvantage and social and economic isolation of the club's membership, and the relative absence of important forms of social capital among its members, meant that they have had difficulty remaining afloat, and Hudson points out that the sporting club is one of the only avenues through which people from these backgrounds interact directly with the mainstream community.

Hudson adds 'linking social capital' to the traditional bonding and bridging social capitals, and this means something very similar to Carrington and Marshall's 'institutional social capital': 'Linking social capital is the relationships people have with those in power. Linking social capital enables individuals and community groups to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community such as government' (Hudson 2011, p. 6). He notes that bridging social capital is especially important for building tolerant, cohesive communities, and there is much research to support his claim about the capacity of racial and ethnic stereotypes to flourish in environments where there is separation between groups (low bridging capital), as there is little experience to undermine such negative views of others.

Reporting on Victorian government social capital surveys (2004, 2006, 2008), and in particular the 2008 survey, Hudson notes that Shepparton scored worse on 13 of the 19 community indicators than the rest of regional Victoria, and on 10 of 19 indicators compared to the rest of Victoria (Hudson 2011, p. 14). One indicator that stood out across the 2004, 2006 and 2008 surveys was that 'More Shepparton residents than in Victoria as a whole felt unsafe on the streets after dark'. Hudson argued that this might relate to higher rates of crime against the person in Shepparton, compared to the rest of Victoria, and also the higher levels than for Victoria as a whole of youths aged 15-19 who were not engaged in work or education, who were very visible on the streets during the day and night, and who were also overrepresented in crime statistics. In the 2008 survey it was also found that more Shepparton residents than for Victoria as a whole 'felt that multiculturalism didn't make life in the area better', and felt less valued by society. These findings about views of multiculturalism are significant for this project. In 2004 Shepparton residents were far more likely than the rest of Victoria to think that multiculturalism made the place better, but this finding had been reversed in later surveys, including in 2008, and in 2007 Shepparton residents were far less likely to agree with the view that it was good for society to be made up of different cultures. Hudson concluded that this had something to do with the changing mix of immigrants to Shepparton, including fewer Europeans and New Zealanders, and much larger numbers from

Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Congo, and the sharp rise in people of Muslim faith, which had gone from 1.5% of Shepparton's population in 1996, to 4.8% by the 2006 Census. On the other hand, Hudson pointed out that there were positive signs of social capital in Shepparton that indicated a strong basis for improvement in social capital and social cohesion. For example, when compared with the rest of Victoria:

- More Shepparton residents thought they lived in an active community, with people getting involved in local issues and activities than the rest of Victoria.
- More thought there was a wide range of groups to join.
- More thought there were opportunities to volunteer in local groups.
- More (many more), participated in local sport than other Victorians.
- More had been members of organised groups that had taken local action.
- More had been volunteers (Hudson 2011, p. 14).

For their *Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Security in Victoria Report* to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Lentini et al 2009), Monash University researchers Pete Lentini, Anna Halafoff and Ela Ogru did two focus groups in each of Shepparton and Mildura with 'mainstream Australians', as part of a larger focus group study of metropolitan and rural Victoria in the late 2000s. Although based on only two focus groups in Shepparton, Lentini et al highlight negative views of Muslims expressed in those focus groups, as well as the view that Muslims were keeping to themselves and not doing enough to integrate into Australian society. They note that some people commented that Muslims were a 'negative presence in their neighbourhoods' (Lentini et al 2009, p. 32). Focus groups in other areas also expressed such views, but the theme was less prominent in the Mildura focus groups. However, it was noted that some participants of one of Mildura's focus groups, when asked about threats to social harmony, said that 'non-Christians were creating problems within the state and Australia' (Lentini et al 2009, p. 22).

Shepparton and Mildura were included with other areas as expressing the view that newer migrants were not doing enough to learn English, or that governments were not doing enough to force them to learn English, and this was considered by them to be the biggest threat to social harmony in Australia. More positively, Mildura was also highlighted as expressing the view, in its two focus groups, that the experience with successful migration and gradual inclusion of ethnic groups into the broader community gave them confidence in social

harmony being a continuing achievement in their community (Lentini et al 2009, p. 21). Mildura focus groups also praised highly the diversity of their community (Lentini et al 2009, p. 20).

As noted earlier, The Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion reports have been conducted since 2007. Of specific interest for this project is the *2013 Mapping Social Cohesion Local Areas Report*, which included the town of Shepparton as one of the five local areas surveyed (two metropolitan, and three regional). All five areas were chosen because they were ranked among the 20% most disadvantaged local areas of Australia. The authors note that the Scanlon Foundation surveys have consistently found that disadvantaged areas score lower on the social cohesion index, which has the five main domains of:

- **Belonging:** Shared values, identification with Australia, trust.
- **Social justice and equity:** Evaluation of national policies.
- **Participation:** Voluntary work, political and co-operative involvement.
- **Acceptance and rejection, legitimacy:** Experience of discrimination, attitudes towards minorities and newcomers.
- **Worth:** Life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations (Markus 2014, p. 17).

In this survey, Shepparton performed only marginally lower than the rest of Australia in terms of the composite Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, at 2.5 points less. When examining the different domains, it was slightly higher than the national average on political participation, was higher on belonging, equal for sense of worth, a little lower for acceptance (rejection), but performed much worse for ‘Social justice and equity’, at 16 points less. It is also relevant to look at answers to specific questions, such as those used to tap attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity. Here Shepparton has more negative attitudes than the national average on some questions. For example, while 56% of the national population ‘disagree with government funding to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance’, 67% in Shepparton disagree; while 42% of the national population believe that ‘immigration is too high’, 52% in Shepparton believe this; 31% of people from Shepparton feel negatively about immigrants from Iraq, while 22% is the national average; 33% of Shepparton residents have a negative personal attitude towards Muslims, which is high in itself and a cause for concern, but we cannot compare this with the rest of the population, as this question was not asked in the 2013 national survey. In this respect, Shepparton’s negative attitude was lower than that of three of the other local areas surveyed (Markus 2014, p. 34). On feeling that most

people could be trusted, Shepparton's level of agreement was 35%, well below the national average of 45% (Markus 2014, p. 26).

The statistics for community strength for Shepparton and Mildura are available from the Community Indicators Victoria (partnered by VicHealth) website: for Shepparton http://www.communityindicators.net.au/wellbeing_reports/greater_shepparton; and for Mildura http://www.communityindicators.net.au/wellbeing_reports/mildura. There are multiple relevant indicators. An interesting parallel between Shepparton and Mildura is that both places are well below the average for feeling safe walking in the street alone at night – more than 20 points below the average for either their region (Hume for Shepparton, Mallee for Mildura) or for Victoria as a whole. On most of the other indicators of community strength, with some important exceptions, both places do just below, as well as, or slightly better than Victoria.

6) Government Policies and Frameworks Relevant to Social Cohesion and Multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura

There is a range of Federal, Victorian and Local Government policies, legislative Acts, programs and funding sources, that contribute to enhancing multiculturalism and social cohesion, and which provide the broad governance framework that supports such outcomes in Shepparton and Mildura.

Federal

Writing in 2013, Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013) listed and discussed a wide range of then current Federal policies and programmes that had as their direct aim the promotion of social cohesion. These included the Labor Government's Social Inclusion Agenda, its multicultural policy *The People of Australia* (2010), and the many settlement programs and funding sources, including funding for education and training, English language acquisition, interpreting and translating services, trauma counselling for humanitarian entrants, the Living in Harmony community grants, and so on. They also include anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies and programmes. Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013, pp. 32-33) emphasised the 'whole of government' approach to social cohesion that had been a feature of the Howard government, as outlined by former Minister Kevin Andrews. The 'National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security', created by the Howard

government in 2005-06, which was continued under the Rudd and Gillard governments, was also an important social cohesion policy, aimed in particular at Australia's newer Muslim communities and to combat extremism. This provided grants to community organisations for efforts to combat racism, intolerance and discrimination, and to help build resilient, socially cohesive and harmonious communities.

A key framework highlighted by Dandy and Pe-Pua was the Gillard government's Social Inclusion approach, which included the setting up of Australia's Social Inclusion Board. The Social Inclusion Agenda (Australian Social Inclusion Board 2010) was specifically focused on people who were most disadvantaged in Australia, and aimed to make sure that everyone felt valued by and had the opportunity to fully participate in Australian society. It especially focused on older Australians, people who were not engaged in education or work, people living in low socio-economic households, people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians, sole parent families, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Abbott Coalition government has since dismantled the Social Inclusion Board. Some of the current Abbott Federal government's key multicultural and social cohesion programmes are now run out of the Department of Social Services. For example, the 'Multicultural Affairs Grants' are seen as 'a major component of the Government's approach to cultural diversity', and aim to address the following key objectives:

- the importance of all **Australians respecting one another** regardless of cultural, racial or religious differences
- the **fair treatment of all Australians**, encouraging people to recognise that our interactions should be accepting of, and responsive to, each other's backgrounds, circumstances, needs and preferences
- **opportunities for people to participate** equitably in Australian society and to understand the rights and responsibilities that we share as part of that society
- **a sense of belonging for everyone** by helping communities work towards a spirit of inclusiveness and a shared identity as Australians
- the **benefits** of living in a culturally diverse society
- to build the **capacity of specific communities** who are under significant pressure because of their culture or religion.

Multicultural Affairs grants have two main components, the Diversity and Social Cohesion (DSC) grants, aimed at not for profit organisations to contribute to addressing ‘issues of cultural, racial and religious intolerance’, and explicitly aim to fund projects for up to \$100,000 over three years to contribute to social cohesion, bringing all Australians together and enhancing community connections, and the Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants that offer smaller amounts (up to \$5000) for ‘community groups and organisations...for multicultural arts and festivals projects. These projects provide opportunities for Australians of all backgrounds to come together and experience different cultural heritages and traditions, which in turn encourages social cohesion and mutual understanding’ (see <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/multicultural-affairs-grants>).

The People of Australia policy’s four broad principles involve 1) the right to expression of cultural diversity; 2) the commitment to access and equity, and equality of opportunity for all; 3) a commitment to reaping the benefits of Australia’s cultural diversity; and 4) a commitment to promote cultural acceptance, and to tackle discrimination and racism (Australian Government 2011, p. 5). Key initiatives included: a new independent advisory body, the Australian Multicultural Council, with a broad role, tasked with acting as a multicultural champion in the community, including implementing a ‘multicultural ambassadors’ program ‘to articulate the beliefs of and help celebrate our multicultural nation’, advising government on multicultural policy, and ensuring that Australian government services responded to the needs of immigrant and refugee communities, through a formal role in the strengthened access and equity strategy; the creation of a new ‘National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy’, bringing together multiple government departments, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Race Discrimination Commissioner, and the new advisory body, in consultation with non-government organisations; new grants to community groups for multicultural arts and festivals as part of the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program; further measures to strengthen Access and Equity, and to bring it into line with the government’s ‘social inclusion’ agenda; and a Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership program, ‘to create connections and involve youth from new and emerging communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including refugees and minor refugees), through sport and active recreation activities’ (Australian Government 2011: 7-8).

Victorian State Government

Victorian state governments have been active in their promotion of both multiculturalism and social cohesion for decades. Previous relevant policies have included the Bracks Labor Government's *Growing Victoria Together* (2001), which aimed to strengthen Victoria's performance in ten key areas:

Thriving economy

1. More quality jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria
2. Growing and linking all of Victoria

Quality health and education

3. High quality, accessible health and community services
4. High quality education and training for lifelong learning

Healthy environment

5. Protecting the environment for future generations
6. Efficient use of natural resources

Caring communities

7. Building friendly, confident and safe communities
8. A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity

Vibrant democracy

9. Greater public participation and more accountable government
10. Sound financial management

The Bracks Labor Government's *A Fairer Victoria: Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage* (2006) took a broad approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable Victorians, including children (especially those at risk), older people at risk of losing their independence, Indigenous Victorians, disadvantaged people, people with physical disabilities and those experiencing mental health problems. *A Fairer Victoria* was focused on better service delivery, but also upon building stronger, more socially cohesive communities. The Brumby Labor Government developed the *All of Us: Victoria's Multicultural Policy* in 2009. This built on the Multicultural Victoria Act 2004 and emphasised a whole of government approach and a whole of community responsibility for multiculturalism. It also emphasised that Victoria had to make sure that it made full use of its cultural diversity:

Victoria must sustain multiculturalism if we are to continue to capitalise on the economic opportunities that it provides. In an era of major global challenges, including climate change, challenging economic circumstances and security concerns, cohesive societies with a shared sense of identity and purpose will succeed (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2009, p. 8).

The Napthine Coalition Government's main multicultural and citizenship affairs policy was *Victoria's Advantage: Unity, Diversity, Opportunity* and is still listed on the VMC's website. This policy included a strong commitment to multiculturalism. Victoria's main legislation that supports multiculturalism is Victoria's *Multiculturalism Act 2011*. In early May 2015, the Andrews Labor Government announced the 'A Welcoming and Harmonious Victoria' policy, that invests \$74 million in funding for multicultural affairs and social cohesion in Victoria, including funding for key organisations that promote these things, such as the Ethnic Communities Councils, and ethnic welfare organisations. Funding is also provided for initiatives to deal with family violence, and for enhancing community capacity and participation for people from CALD backgrounds, with special emphases on recent arrivals, refugees, seniors, women and young people (Scott 2015).

Local Government

Shepparton

The Greater Shepparton City Council's 'Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015', was developed in consultation with CALD communities, CALD service providers and stakeholders, and Council staff and aimed to make sure that Shepparton made full use of its cultural diversity, and contributed to the development of a harmonious community 'inclusive of all' (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 5). It sought to express the Council's 'vision for this region...[as]...a vibrant, cohesive society which celebrates and incorporates aspects of cultural diversity within daily life' (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 14). It aimed to enhance the sense of belonging of CALD communities, who had expressed in consultations a strong desire for achieving a greater sense of belonging to the Shepparton community. It also aimed to make sure that its services were adapted to meet the needs of Shepparton's culturally diverse communities. The experience of Greater Shepparton City Council as a partner with VicHealth in the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) pilot (discussed in detail below) had helped to stimulate and

develop the strategy and action plan, and Shepparton already had in place a ‘Cultural Development Team, with a dedicated Cultural Development Officer’ (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 6). Council advanced six strategic directions:

- Engagement; communicate and education (‘Develop strong and meaningful relationships with CALD communities to provide opportunities to increase their understanding, engagement and participation in the wider community’)
- Partnership (‘Council will work in partnership with communities, services providers and government bodies to enhance settlement coordination and maximise collaborative efforts towards building inclusive communities’)
- Leadership (Council is ‘committed to building local leadership within the CALD community and supporting other initiatives that develop positive perceptions of diversity’, Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15)
- Celebration (Council is committed to celebrating diversity ‘in cultural and mainstream events within the region’, and ‘actively acknowledge[s] the real and positive influence, past and present, migrants have made to our region’ [Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15]. Some examples of supported cultural events include Harmony Day, Cultural Diversity Week, Refugee Week, Congolese Independence Day and South Sudanese Independence Day, Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 8)
- Advocate (actively advocating for improvements in settlement services for CALD communities, and also playing an active role in ‘promoting positive opinions of CALD communities, including working to combat prejudices and race based discrimination’, Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15)
- Services (Council would work to ensure that ‘our services are culturally appropriate and continue to address the specific cultural needs of our CALD communities’, Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15)

Council mapped out a series of actions within the 2012-2015 timeframe to address these strategic directions (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, pp. 16-22).

Notably, the plan specifically excluded local Aboriginal communities from the strategy, saying that Council would work with them through a different partnership model (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 6). This may be because of the classic distinction in multicultural policy between immigrant communities and Indigenous peoples. Aboriginal

people would be involved in the Aboriginal Partnership Strategy (see <http://www.greatershepparton.com.au/aboriginal-partnerships>).

There is currently in circulation for comment and consultation a draft for the next Cultural Diversity strategic plan. As noted by key informant, Shepparton City Council Cultural Development Officer at the recent Regional Advisory Council meeting (25/05/15) that we attended, this new strategy and plan will build substantially on the first Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, and push in new, advanced directions, given that the Council now has much greater experience in this area.

Other important Council actions to note include that Council is a signatory to the Human Rights Commission's 'Racism. It Stops With Me' campaign.

Learnings from the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) pilot program

The LEAD pilot program was a partnership between VicHealth and two local government councils, Greater Shepparton City Council and the City of Whittlesea Council, aimed at addressing the VicHealth priority area of reducing racial discrimination (from VicHealth Strategy and Business Plan 2009-2013). The pilot project ran from 2009-2013. The learnings and findings from this project are relevant to major aspects of social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton, and by extension to Mildura.

LEAD involved assessing the value of place-based approaches to addressing racism and race-based discrimination. VicHealth was especially focused on the impact of racism and race-based discrimination on mental health. A major survey from 2006 had clearly shown the negative impact of racism and race-based discrimination on the mental health of Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and CALD communities. The pilot project involved research (including observation of interaction between diverse individuals and groups in public spaces) a series of community surveys of beliefs and attitudes about race and diversity (at the beginning of the project), and collaborative activities, and development of strategies aimed at addressing race-based discrimination. The final report from VicHealth sums these up as:

- developing new tools and resources to support organisational change
- changing policies, procedures and communication strategies within organisations

- delivering pro-diversity and cultural awareness training programs
- holding events celebrating cultural diversity
- running social marketing campaigns
- changing media reporting practices

The final report highlights successes of the pilot program, and also some limitations. Some of the successes included improvement to Local Councils' policies and procedures in relation to servicing and liaising with their diverse communities, and greater awareness in Councils and in collaborating organisations of cultural diversity issues. The strength of the place based approach was supported by evaluation findings such as evidence of increased pro-diversity attitudes in Councils and in workplaces involved in the LEAD program (VicHealth 2014, p. 8). In Shepparton, the organisations where interventions occurred were Council, three primary schools and three secondary schools, and two Retail sector businesses. LEAD created and implemented two diversity audit tools – the Workplace diversity and anti-discrimination assessment tool and the Lead School-based audit tool, both 'designed to generate discussion and reflection rather than measure organisational performance' (VicHealth 2014, p. 18).

The main things that Shepparton Council did to change its own processes were:

- adopted a six-point Aboriginal Protocols policy outlining the council's commitment to acknowledging the Aboriginal community
- updated the council's style guide to enhance communication with the Aboriginal community
- developed an Aboriginal Communications Guide to have specific information accessible to all employees across the organisation when engaging with the local Aboriginal community
- established a faith/prayer/quiet room within council offices and guidelines for its use
- adopted its first Cultural Diversity and Inclusion strategy and associated action plan in March 2012 (with the support of LEAD)
- included policies regarding cultural leave arrangements in its enterprise bargaining agreement

- reviewed other policies regarding work experience and strategies to attract people from diverse backgrounds into the council
- amended its Community Matching Grants scheme to include criteria regarding the accessibility of projects for all people within the community (VicHealth 2014, p. 19).

One of the successes of the program was evidence that the two Councils continued on with and remained committed to their diversity awareness approaches after the LEAD pilot finished.

The important role of the media in contributing to the embracing of local diversity was highlighted. Communities themselves perceived an important role for media due to perceptions of negative coverage and representation (VicHealth 2014, p. 26). The evaluation found that the encouragement of closer connections between Council and local media could improve coverage of CALD and Aboriginal issues, and that LEAD had also facilitated closer relationships between local media and diverse communities (VicHealth 2014, p. 22), including those communities with least access to and engagement with local media. Councils could encourage positive coverage through profile pieces on culturally significant events that could counterbalance coverage of controversial or negative events (VicHealth 2014, p. 26).

VicHealth concluded that: ‘local government was seen as the natural organisation to be at the forefront of addressing race-based discrimination, due to its ability to serve as a central coordinating point and engage with organisations across the community’ (VicHealth 2014, p. 23).

The implementation of programs under LEAD was less extensive than initially planned as it became apparent that there was a paucity of processes and tools developed to deal with these issues at a local level, and considerable time was devoted to developing such tools. LEAD had initially planned to engage Arts and Sporting organisations, but this proved largely unsuccessful. However, Shepparton did engage a group of artists to produce works devoted to the theme of diversity that were shown in the Council building and on public billboards, and the Shepparton Touch football Association reviewed its ‘Code of Conduct’ to make sure that people from diverse backgrounds were treated equally and with respect. Shepparton Cycling and the Shepparton Touch Football Association held a ‘Welcoming Day’ aimed at encouraging Shepparton’s diverse community members to get involved (see these and other

achievements listed on the Council Website for LEAD pilot project in Shepparton

<http://www.greatershepparton.com.au/lead>

One finding of the observation in public spaces research, in places including major shopping centres and sports centres, was that people from visible minority groups tended to have no contact with mainstream others or to interact with people from other ethnic/racial groups, while people from majority groups (English speaking and Anglo) tended to mix mainly with others from their own majority group (VicHealth 2014, p. 16).

Pro-diversity interventions at the level of local organisations were dependent on a number of factors for their success, including the extent to which organisations had the power and capacity to implement changes at a local level, including to local structures (for example, to work practices and employment practices in workplaces). For example, it may be that it was better to target interventions at the level of the Department of Education and Early Childhood to help improve diversity approaches in schools rather than in the schools themselves, that often lack the resources and have limited opportunities to take on new approaches. On the other hand, Council could still play a positive role in bringing schools together to share ideas and practices related to cultural diversity (VicHealth 2014, p. 26). Local businesses that were part of state and or national businesses/corporations may have limited capacity to implement local cultural diversity policies.

Because the implementation phase of the pilot was curtailed, the LEAD project decided not to repeat the community surveys of attitudes and beliefs about race and cultural diversity at the end of the Pilot. Thus, they could not assess how successful LEAD had been in shifting beliefs and attitudes in a positive direction (VicHealth 2014, p. 27).

Key recommendations emerging from the evaluation of the LEAD project were that place-based approaches to improving cultural diversity relations and reducing experiences of racism and race-based discrimination should consider the following:

- working with local government as a central partner assessing community experiences of race-based discrimination, including places where race-based discrimination occurs, before implementing interventions so that actions can be targeted appropriately
- assessing the numbers of suitable target organisations in each setting to ascertain the appropriateness of the place-based approach

- employing a program coordinator supported by senior management
- targeting organisations with experience in working with cultural diversity
- phasing implementation in order to harness new resources at each stage of the intervention
- maximising the level of intervention within organisations
- evaluating the results.

The Report concluded that:

Embracing diversity will be the key to Victoria's future social cohesion and prosperity. The LEAD program has shown that multi-faceted place-based strategies that impact on individuals, organisations, communities and society as a whole have the potential to have a positive impact on all Victorians and thus to contribute to Victoria's future (VicHealth 2014, p. 28).

Significant research was conducted under the auspices of LEAD, including the survey of the impact of racial discrimination on the mental health of Aborigines in Victoria (Ferdinand, Paradies and Kelaher 2012), and the review of strategies and resources to address race-based discrimination and to support diversity in schools (Greco, Priest and Paradies 2010). The latter stressed the importance of dealing with racial discrimination in schools, since research had shown them to be major institutions where young people, especially from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds, experience racial discrimination (Greco, Priest and Paradies 2010, p. 6). Addressing these experiences in schools would contribute to Victoria's commitment to addressing race-based discrimination, supporting cultural diversity and improving social cohesion, as spelled out in *All of Us: Victoria's Multicultural Policy* (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2009). The review emphasised the need for a whole-of-school approach and a multi-level strategy including:

- school policies and guidelines
- curriculum and pedagogy
- training and development
- student support and development
- parent and community involvement
- monitoring and reporting of student performance and race-based discrimination (Greco, Priest and Paradies 2010, p. 17).

Findings from this review were expected to ‘guide anti-racism efforts of schools participating in LEAD, as well as inform VicHealth’s broader work, reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity’ (Greco, Priest and Paradies 2010, p. 9).

Mildura

Mildura Rural City Council has a raft of policies, strategies and programs aimed at providing the governance and partnership relations that contribute to and shape social cohesion and multiculturalism in Mildura. It is apparent from surveying this range of documents that the Council sees community well-being, including social cohesion and acceptance of cultural diversity, as core business. These include: the Community Engagement Framework and the Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, that have recently been merged together to form the Northern Mallee Community Partnership; the Community Health and Well-Being Plan 2013-2017; and the Social Inclusion Policy and the Social Inclusion Framework, under which the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2012-2017 sits, together with a range of other strategies and plans promoting inclusion of young children and youth, the aged, and Indigenous people (through an Aboriginal Action Committee) (see Mildura Rural City Council 2012, p. 9).

Mildura Rural City Council has been innovative in pursuing policy based on evidence of community needs. Since the early 2000s, as Hawson (2013) shows, it has instituted the process of gathering extensive social indicators to measure the state of community health. Key early figures in establishing this process were Tony Vinson and Vernon Knight (who served as a local councillor). Hawson argues that this approach makes Mildura at the cutting edge of democratically innovative local councils in the Victorian context. Growing out of this social indicators approach, Council highlighted major areas of concern, and set up Operational groups to engage with those areas of concern, as part of a Community Engagement Framework (CEF) created in 2006 as a mechanism to govern through community. The CEF operated through a CEF Governance Group, and four Operational groups, the Mental Health Operational Group, the Education Operational Group, Child well-Being and Safety Operational Group, and the Safety Operational Group. The Operational Groups engaged with the local community to address problems, issues and needs, some of which had been directed to them by the CEF Governance Group, and also developed annual

action plans in their particular area of concern. Council has explicitly stated that its vision is to make Mildura ‘the most liveable, people friendly community in Australia’. It conducts a biannual ‘Community Wellbeing Survey’ which has been used as an evaluation tool for the CEF. As Hawson (2013, p. 197) argues, a well- functioning community functions well by blending the following attributes:

- The integration of people, groups and community organisations
- Maintaining direction, energy and motivation
- The substance and style of decision making
- Resource generation and effective allocation

The Community Wellbeing survey measures the community’s views in relation to these attributes.

As mentioned, the CEF has now been merged with the Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, that was concerned with health care and health needs of the community, to form the Northern Mallee Community Partnership:

This model brings together the primary and acute health sectors, the educational, safety and local government sectors and is supported by more than forty community organisations. Together we are now working in partnership towards the health and wellbeing of our community (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2013, p. 8).

The ‘Community Health and Well-Being Plan 2013-2017’ has a comprehensive agenda covering seventeen ‘health and wellbeing priority areas’: community cohesion; community safety; obesity; family violence; mental health; social inclusion and diversity; drugs and alcohol; smoking; life stages; access to services; local food connections; climate change; water; employment; education; pressures of modern living; and food and our community (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2013, p. 5).

The Social Inclusion Policy (Mildura Rural City Council 2014), that is informed by multicultural ideas, and expresses a strong commitment to pursuing social cohesion, is a major strategic framework guiding City Council policies, programs, community consultation, and development and delivery of services. The Policy states that Council will ‘identify the social inclusion implications in the decisions we take and the projects and partnerships in which we participate’, will be ‘community focused’, will always ‘engage and consult with the

community in the development and delivery of services’, will ‘utilise a community development approach to empower and strengthen communities, encourage cooperative practices within communities, and promote tolerance of differences’, that its ‘policies and initiatives will reflect community aspirations’, will ‘adopt a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach as a preferred way of working toward achieving community wellbeing’, and that decision making will be based on objective data, and in consultation and engagement with ‘community groups, including youth, migrants, indigenous and women’ (Mildura Rural City Council 2014, p. 1). In pursuing greater senses of belonging and attachment to, and participation in local community, Council would specifically ‘work toward engaging identified communities to encourage participation in community life’ (Mildura Rural City Council 2014, p. 2). The Social Inclusion Policy was implemented in conjunction with the Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2014 to 2018, the Healthy Ageing Strategy 2010-2014, and a range of other plans and frameworks.

Finally, like Shepparton, Mildura Rural City Council has introduced a ‘Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2012-2017’, which it developed through several months of community consultations. The development of this strategy had been a priority area of the 2009-13 Council Plan, and demonstrated Council’s ‘commitment to diversity and recognises the role that we as a Council have to play in promoting the strength of diversity and also ensuring that our services and core business are inclusive of everyone’, in line with Council’s Social Inclusion Policy. The strategy aimed to build on work that Council had already done and was doing ‘to strengthen the relationships between Mildura Rural City Council and members of our region’s CALD communities as well as other stakeholders’. Council’s activities in this area included: supporting cultural events and projects through funding and other commitments; the LEAP program – Arts Participation; the creation of a Social Inclusion officer role; partnering in the Skilled migration program; and engaging in partnerships with SMECC (Mildura Rural City Council 2102, p. 10). The Key strategic directions and Action Plan lists 6 key areas: Information and Communication; Services; Recreational and Social; Employment; Economic and Grants; Leadership and Advocacy. These would ‘provide the framework for future action for Mildura Rural City Council to develop and support cultural diversity within our community’ over the five years of the strategy (Mildura Rural City Council 2102, p. 13).

- The proactive approach by local governments at both Shepparton and Mildura to social inclusion, to accommodating diversity, supporting multiculturalism and

multicultural agendas, addressing racism and discrimination, and integrating recent immigrants is a contributing factor to the multicultural success of these places. The project will examine this factor more closely through investigation of Council policies, programs, activities and engagement with major community stakeholders.

7) Possible Problem Areas Relevant to Social Cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura, Based on Social Indicators and Socio-Economic Profiles

The final section of this review surveys potential problem areas for multiculturalism and social cohesion as evident in important social indicators for Shepparton and Mildura. As noted in the previous section, Mildura Rural City Council has produced Social Indicators Reports in 2006, 2008 and 2012, drawing upon Census and other data. Mildura Rural City Council also conducts ‘Community Well-Being’ surveys. For present purposes we draw out key relevant findings from the latest Social Indicators Report, from 2012. For Shepparton we make use of two recent reports by social researcher Katrina Alford (2011, 2014), on Shepparton’s social needs and its socio-economic profile.

It is well established that rural areas in Australia are generally more disadvantaged than metropolitan areas, across several important dimensions including employment opportunities, health, education and access to public services and amenities (Habibis and Walter 2009; Brett 2011), and this is true for Shepparton and Mildura. This adds to tensions, as areas of rural towns have become locales of inter-generational disadvantage, reflected in higher rates of unemployment, single parent families, and jobless families, and spatially concentrated poverty (FECCA 2010), coupled with challenges and tensions related to rapid ethnic and racial diversification.

- Crucial research questions that arise in this context, and to be explored, by our research relate to how people understand, experience and live the different, multi-dimensional forms of inequality in Shepparton and Mildura. Australia has prided itself on its egalitarian traditions but critics have often pointed to the inequalities this ideology conceals. Dempsey’s (1990, 1992) longitudinal studies of small town life explored this as a key theme, highlighting the roles of class, gender and age-based relations in perpetuating inequalities and often socially hidden, and unrecognized, social divisions that marred many inhabitants’ lives in communities priding themselves on their caring, family-like embrace. The locale studied by Dempsey was

relatively ethnically homogenous, long-settled by people from predominantly British backgrounds. Shepparton's and Mildura's social divisions occur in much more racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Mildura

The Mildura RCC Social Indicators Report 2012 (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012) consists of statistical, demographic overviews of Mildura and immediate surrounding areas that offers insights regarding questions of social cohesion. Most of the data reported are based on figures published in various other reports as of 2011. The report focuses on 'Mildura RCC', which 'refers to the Mildura Rural City Council Local Government Area (LGA) in North-West Victoria, covering 22,083 square kilometres and home to almost 60,000 people' (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. x). The report indicates that the populations of Mildura and surrounds (Mildura RCC) are less diverse than Victoria and Melbourne, and that they have maintained the same level of diversity since the early 2000s. The report also indicates that some measures of social cohesion and community health indicate improvement since the 2006 and 2008 Social Indicators reports, but that there are issues that need to be addressed around growing inequality, employment, and community health.

The report executive summary highlights seven notable findings, particularly regarding changes between the 2006 report findings and the 2012 report findings (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 11):

- 1) The overall population is aging at the top ages (those over 80).
- 2) But a high percentage of new residents were young families.
- 3) Between 2006 and 2011, the proportion of high income families in Mildura RCC increased by 5.6 percent, and long-term residents with medium to high incomes (\$1000/week) rose from 10% to 17%. At the same time, 60% of residents earned less than \$600/week (the measure for 'low income'), a percentage significantly high in comparison to the rest of Victoria. Rental stress and low incomes both contribute to a significant proportion of the population in overall financial stress.
- 4) There was improvement in childhood safety/accidents, but the rate remains high compared to the rest of Victoria.

- 5) New migrant residents in Mildura RCC were statistically largely from India, Afghanistan and England. About one third spoke English as their primary language and most were not university educated. English as an additional language was an issue to be addressed, posing a barrier to social cohesion.
- 6) There were issues with employment outcomes, Mildura recording unemployment rates above 7%, higher than the state average. Employment as managers and labourers declined.
- 7) Domestic violence continues to be a problem, with an increase of 60% in the rate of domestic violence between 2007-08 and 2011-12, these numbers being twice the state average of incident reports.

The 2012 report measured isolation by language and compared the figures to earlier reports, finding that 15% of Mildura RCC residents experienced isolation because of language, 1.3 percentage points higher than in 2006 (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 28). Compared to Regional Victoria (which experienced a 4.2% decline in the study years), this number is quite high. Notably, Robinvale had 28.2% reporting social isolation because of language, which is likely linked to the higher percentage of overall newer migrants (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 28).

- This issue of English as an additional language posing a barrier to social cohesion arose in numerous conversations in our initial fieldwork in Mildura. It has a bearing on perceptions that established community members have of newly arrived migrants, the experiences of the migrants themselves, including opportunities and constraints, and overall social cohesion in the city and region. We will take this issue into further consideration in the course of the project.

Family income inequality for Mildura RCC has increased, as indicated by the relatively high proportion of families in the low-income bracket and the simultaneous five-year 5.6 percentage points increase in high income families (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 11). These numbers are consistent with Regional Victoria and Melbourne, and the report suggests links to issues in employment as well as housing/rental prices. 30% of households struggle with high-level rental stress, though the percentage has decreased slightly since 2006 (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee

Community Partnership 2012, p. 13). The average taxable income of Mildura RCC residents showed an upward trend between 2007-08 and 2009-2010, reaching \$46,279. This number is 'well below' the state income level averages (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 46), and we would add that there is a possible link between rising average income level and simultaneous growing inequality.

- We wonder whether these high rental stress figures may affect newer migrant groups disproportionately, as well as Indigenous Australians and other marginalised groups. Questions around housing availability, pricing, and policy will likely be of interest to the project because they figure prominently into the daily, financial concerns of a high proportion of Mildura residents.

Another economic concern for the community was an increase in the unemployment rate between 2006 and 2011 of 1.2 percentage points, taking it to 6.6% (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 44). This was higher than Regional Victoria (5.2%) and Melbourne (5.5%). Mildura central had one of the highest rates overall, at 7.7% unemployment. Uptake of the Federal Newstart program, financially assisting those looking for work, was highest for Mildura central (10.6%), compared to 8.8% average for Mildura RCC (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 45).

- Based on our early fieldwork interviews with stakeholders and residents in Mildura, we wonder to what degree high unemployment is due to lack of employment options and/or due in part to restrictions on migration visa working conditions. These are potential correlations that need further study.

The 2012 report compares occupational patterns across the two aggregated localities of Mildura RCC of 'Mildura-Rural' and 'Mildura-Central' (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 38). Compared to state figures, Mildura-Central was lower on white-collar workers, higher on blue-collar, and had a higher proportion of sales workers than Mildura-Rural. Overall for Mildura RCC, the percentage of professionals, technicians and trade workers was 23.3% lower than the state average (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 38). Mildura itself

however recorded 31.4% of these types of skilled workers (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 39). The report found that ‘In 2011, the key employment sectors driving Mildura RCC’s economy were agriculture (15.7%), construction (11.5%), manufacturing (11.4%) and retail trade (10.7%), jointly employing almost half of the resident workforce in Mildura RCC’ (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 42).

- For the purposes of our research, we would like to investigate what percentage of these skilled workers are newer migrants. This is also linked to our interest in the working conditions/restrictions of various visas.

The 2012 report also discusses social cohesion; in particular, measures taken to be indicative were volunteering and unpaid assistance provided to people with disability (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 31). By these measures, between 2006 and 2011 volunteering rates amongst Mildura RCC populations have remained stable, and exceed those of Melbourne. There has also been a 1.0% increase in unpaid assistance to people with disability (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 32).

Another important measure of social cohesion that the 2012 report discusses relates to population stability. The report suggests it is important to have relatively stable populations, with some movement to diversify the community, both of which foster social ties (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 10). The report findings are that between 2001 and 2011 the number of individuals who moved address within or from outside of Mildura RCC decreased from 42.4% to 38.8%. Mildura RCC does however have higher rates of population movement than Regional Victoria. It is also important to note that Mildura itself had the highest recorded population movements at 45.5%.

- By our estimation, this statistical stabilising of the community may indicate a positive trend for social cohesion in Mildura RCC, particularly given that part of the 38.8% consists of newer migrants moving in. However, the Mildura community is

experiencing a high proportion of population movements, which warrants further study.

Statistics on crime reporting indicate a picture of stability and/or slight movement toward instability for public safety. Crimes against property were stable in Mildura RCC between the 2006 and 2011 reports, around 6.5%, however the Mildura community reported a 2011 rate of 7.1% (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 34). There was an increase in crimes against persons over the five years, with the highest increases in Mildura and Robinvale (both rising by 2.2%) (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 35). The poorest results for Mildura RCC are found in figures on domestic violence. Drawing on family incident report data from Victoria Police, the rate of family incidents increased by 60% between 2007-08 and 2011-12. An astounding figure, this represents a real concern for individuals, the community, and social cohesion. This percentage increase is consistent with the state wide figures, but the 'overall rate of family violence per 100,000 in Mildura is approximately twice the State average and has consistently been so for several years' (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 36).

The report authors note that these figures (on domestic violence) likely reflect negatively on overall community wellbeing, safety, and the need for related services (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 36). We also suggest these figures require further investigation for links between high rates of family violence and other potential correlations with employment and other larger social-structural factors.

The 2012 report found significant figures regarding changes in educational participation and attainment. Pre-school attendance rates dropped between 2006 and 2011 across Victoria, with an average attendance rate of about 18% in 2011 (including Mildura RCC). Mildura recorded an attendance rate decrease of 9.8% between these years, 'the second most significant drop of all communities since 2006' (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 53). The overall rates of year 12 completions for Mildura RCC have increased by 3.3%, though the levels are lower than the Melbourne average (59.3%) (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 57). Just over a third of the Mildura RCC population over 15 years old had completed year 12. The numbers for post-school qualifications also suggest increases, though lower than State averages. Certificate

holders and graduate diploma/graduate certificate rates have remained consistent over the five years, but bachelor's degrees have gone up by 1.2% (to 6.2%) in 2011. Again, this number is lower than the Melbourne average of 14.8% (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 58).

Shepparton

Hudson (2011) notes that disadvantage has a locational component, and that there is evidence of some severe comparative disadvantage in Greater Shepparton, according to SEIFA scores. Some of these populations in Mooroopna (3,062) and Shepparton (6,926) are part of the most disadvantaged 10% of Australia's population. These areas are very multicultural, and have higher proportions of single parent families. Karen Alford (2011) points out that in 2009 Shepparton was recognised by the Federal Government as one of 20 disadvantaged regions in Australia. As a result of vulnerable and changing labour markets and employment opportunities, it was designated a Priority Employment Area (PEA). We outline here some of the social indicators and socio-economic circumstances of Shepparton that pose potential barriers or challenges to social cohesion.

Katrina Alford (2011), in her report 'Shepparton: the needs and issues for philanthropy', outlines some socio-economic factors contributing to the Shepparton population's lower than average socio-economic status. She writes that recent drought/climate change and broader structural economic factors have changed Shepparton's employment opportunities, with many of the agricultural jobs (at all levels) becoming redundant (Alford 2011, p. 6). Health and community sector service jobs have experienced growth while manufacturing jobs have declined (Alford 2011, p. 4), but these service jobs require higher levels of education and Shepparton residents have notably low levels of average educational attainment. Citing DEEWR 2009, Alford (2011, p. 6) notes that 'more than a half of all job applications in north-east Victoria are rejected, owing to insufficient qualifications, training, employability skills and/or experience'. Notably, unemployment in Shepparton has historically been below national rates but since 2009 has been higher, greater Shepparton 6.3%, Australia 5.3% as of September 2009 (Alford 2011, p. 6). This number declined somewhat recently, dropping just below 6% for Shepparton (Alford 2014, p. 9). This unemployment is largely due to a 'skills mismatch', and can be partly addressed by 'diversifying the economy, investing in skilling up

human capital and changing Shepparton’s employment profile from “brawn to brain” (Alford 2014, p. III).

Partly linked to structural shifts in employment opportunity, there is a higher than average ‘welfare dependency’, with 26% of Greater Shepparton receiving Centrelink benefits compared to north-east Victoria 23%, Victoria 17%, and Australia 18% (Alford 2011, citing DEEWR 2009-10). There is wide recognition of these and other indicators of social disadvantage in Greater Shepparton. Shepparton is one of five Australian sites chosen for the Commonwealth’s trial of the Place Based Income Management (PBIM) scheme, involving new welfare provisions including quarantining of welfare payments first established in the Northern Territory under the Federal government’s NTER, and which began in July 2012 (Refugee Council of Australia 2012). While median rent and housing prices are lower in Shepparton than other regional cities, home ownership rates are declining (Alford 2014, p. III).

Low levels of educational attainment are also a worry for greater Shepparton. Alford (2011, p. 7) offers the following numbers on attainment in comparison to the greater region, the State, and the country, in 2006:

Region	Finished Yr 12 or Equivalent	Bachelor or Higher Degree
Greater Shepparton	33%	11%
North-East Victoria	34%	11%
Victoria	49%	19%
Australia	47%	17%

Alford (2011, citing DEECD 2010a & 2011b), notes that literacy and numeracy standards are, on average lower than Victorian student averages by between 4% and 7%. School completion and university enrolment in Shepparton (as well as the greater Hume region) are lower than all Victorian regions (Alford 2014, p. 5, citing GMLLEN 2013).

- In speaking with the heads of campus at the regional La Trobe University campuses in Shepparton and Mildura, they emphasised their view of the importance of addressing primary and secondary educational achievement not only for increasing the number of attendees of later higher education, but also of potentially addressing some of the larger issues to do with social cohesion.

Among the most socio-economically vulnerable groups in Greater Shepparton are the many Indigenous Australians and newer migrants (including over 5,000 Iraqi, Afghani and African)

(Alford 2011, p. 5). One of Shepparton's particular issues around recent migration relates to the type and categories of immigrants that it has been receiving. As Alford points out, when writing about the period up to 2011, about 40% of recent migrants to Shepparton over the previous five years were humanitarian migrants, compared to about 9% in Victoria and 8% in Australia. There are special issues and vulnerabilities for these groups of migrants, particularly due to limited English proficiency and lack of vocational skills (Alford 2011, p. 17, citing DEEWR 2009-2010).

- Alford suggests newer migrants (CALD) are partly disadvantaged socio-economically by their lack of local social ties. This concurs with the research conducted with CALD groups by Boese (2014) and Kilpatrick (2013) cited above. Our initial fieldwork and interviews suggest this is a very important issue for newer arrivals. Those interviewed suggested newer migrants have difficulty finding their way into what numerous community members have told us are two 'cliquey' communities. These comments indicate that the people of the communities of Shepparton and Mildura are friendly, but that finding one's way into social circles is actually quite challenging. This is all the more so for CALD communities. These challenges in becoming part of the social fabric are linked to issues of employment, language acquisition, education, and other elements of social cohesion. We also found that organisations like the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District and Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (as well as civic organisations like Shepparton Police) are running programs that appear to be going some way toward addressing this issue of social inclusion for newer migrants.

Conclusion

This review of the literature suggests that Shepparton and Mildura, as regional multicultural cities, are two highly significant case studies for how social cohesion operates outside of metropolitan areas. While it may be said that these are 'successful' multicultural cities, it is evident that all of Jenson's five indicators of social cohesion (belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy) have an impact on the social fabric of the community. The history of these places is one of people from differing backgrounds, including CALD, living and working in relative harmony. This is, however, contingent partly on there being adequate employment opportunities, which has been an issue in both cities due

to larger socio-political, environmental and economic changes since the 1990s. There are indications that these communities have, in recent times, experienced greater inequalities and some increasing issues of social trust and instability. There are a number of governmental policies along with organisations and community efforts to address issues of social division and to try to redress issues of inequality for the more vulnerable groups such as Indigenous and newer Australians. These efforts have gone some way toward addressing the challenges the communities face, however it is apparent that Shepparton and Mildura will face the continued related issues of lower educational attainment and lower employment (due in part to a mismatch between work opportunities and skills and credentials of potential employees).

Shepparton and Mildura are two cities with histories and contemporary situations of great social complexity as well as apparent contradictions, namely of having higher than average socio-economic problems yet also having relatively strong multicultural social cohesion. When it comes to these and other questions of social cohesion, our reading of the literature suggests the importance of further qualitative research for filling out some of the gaps in understandings of these complexities. We will gain a better understanding of social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura, in meeting with the aims of the project, through understanding the embodied experiences and stories of the people who live out social cohesion in these cities every day. The theory, history, policy, academic literature, and grey literature reviewed in this document all offer a larger framework on which we will be able to overlay the detailed, daily lifeworlds of the people who call Shepparton and Mildura home.

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