VICTORIA’S MULTICULTURAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2018
ORDEN DE PROCEDEIOS

Invitados recibidos con música de la Orquesta de Cuerdas del Colegio Secundario Highvale

Procesión oficial comienza a las 6:00 pm

Discurso de Su Excelencia la Honorable Linda Dessau AC, Gobernadora de Victoria

Discurso de la Honorable Robin Scott MP, Ministra de Asuntos Multiculturales

Menciones de Servicio

Lectura de Aleyna Altinors

Recibimiento de ganadores

Fotos oficiales

Canapes y drinks son servidos

Desembarco por la Orquesta de Cuerdas del Colegio Secundario Highvale

Recepción concluye a las 8:00 pm
MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Victorian community is a beautiful portrait of rich diversity. We are comprised of people from 200 cultural backgrounds and 130 different faiths. We speak 260 different languages and dialects.

The Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence give us the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the contributions of those who work so hard to ensure that our state remains welcoming to newcomers, and inclusive and harmonious for us all.

These Awards enable us to applaud the individuals and organisations who have dedicated themselves to bringing people together, so that everyone can share in the ‘peace and prosperity’ of our State, (as described in our State motto).

So, on behalf of all Victorians, I am delighted to warmly welcome you to Government House. It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the 2018 Award recipients, as well as all the nominees and the good-hearted communities that surround them.

The Hon Linda Dessau AC
Governor of Victoria

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

It is my great pleasure to congratulate all recipients of Victoria’s Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2018.

Victoria is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world. Almost half our population were either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas and more than a quarter speak a language other than English at home.

Our state is world-renowned for being a great place to live and our cultural diversity is a major part of this.

Not only has it given us a vibrant arts, food and entertainment scene, but as Victorians, our everyday exposure to diversity makes us more worldly, welcoming and empathetic.

Victoria’s Multicultural Awards for Excellence honour outstanding individuals and organisations who are sharing their culture with pride and supporting Victorians of all cultural backgrounds to fully participate in all aspects of life.

I also note the many high-quality nominations received, a testament to the outstanding work being undertaken across our state and in our community.

I send my heartfelt thanks to all award recipients for the significant contributions you have made to our state and to your communities. I wish you all the best as you continue your excellent work into the future.

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria
MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Victorians we have much to be proud of. Our state is celebrated for its multiculturalism, with people coming from all over the world to make Victoria their home.

Victoria’s Multicultural Awards for Excellence acknowledge the people and organisations who work tirelessly to ensure that no matter where someone was born, the language they first spoke or the faith they may follow, here in Victoria they can belong.

The importance of this work cannot be understated and it is an ongoing mission that all people and all sectors have a role in.

From professionals to volunteers, businesses and media outlets to not-for-profits, schools and government agencies, these awards recognise the many ways Victorians are supporting one another to contribute and belong.

It is with great pride that I congratulate this year’s award recipients. Their stories and achievements are as diverse as Victoria itself, but one thing they all share is a dedication to fostering harmony and understanding between people of all cultures.

This year’s recipients also build on the legacy of hundreds of previous recipients who also had the same desire to build a stronger, more inclusive Victoria and I applaud this year’s recipients on becoming part of this cohort.

I thank each recipient for the crucial work they do in our Victorian community and for providing inspirational examples of how all Victorians can contribute to strengthening our multicultural state.

The Hon Robin Scott MP
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Multicultural communities give so much to society, and they thrive when communities are connected, and where the sense of belonging in those communities is strong.

Victoria is such a society; well-known for its successful and visible brand of multiculturalism in our civic life. But this doesn’t just happen on its own. It takes the collective goodwill and efforts of many.

It’s why awards ceremonies like these are so important. The actions demonstrated by our recipients which harness Victoria’s cultural diversity are ultimately a legacy for us all, because an inclusive society makes us richer, and better.

The actions of our recipients are also building a stronger, more resilient, and more cohesive society, at a time when we need to be reminded of the great gifts our unique diverse society brings.

A huge congratulations to everyone who is receiving an award today. It’s my favourite day of the year, because through your drive and purpose, you strengthen and inspire us all.

Your work is greatly valued, admired and respected. Thank you from all of us at the Commission, and we look forward to celebrating with you!

Helen Kapalos
Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SERVICE

The Hon Hong Lim MP

On behalf of the Victorian community, the Victorian Multicultural Commission would like to recognise The Hon Hong Lim MP, for decades of dedicated service to promote multiculturalism in Victoria.

As Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Asia Engagement, Mr Lim has supported Victoria’s culturally diverse communities and increased our state’s engagement with Australia’s thriving neighbours to the north.

We thank him for his considerable contributions, dedication and wisdom, and wish him all the best for the future.
2018 AWARD RECIPIENTS

Award for Meritorious Service to the Community

Recognises the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations which enhance multiculturalism in Victoria through either paid or voluntary work.

ORGANISATIONS

All Saints
For its effective engagement of youth local to the outer northern suburbs of Melbourne and their families through sporting and other activities that educate its members on interculturalism and interfaith understanding, gender equality and healthy lifestyles. Their motto is “victoria concordia crescit” or “victory through harmony”.

Australian Hazara Women’s Friendship Network
For its work towards integrating Hazara women into the wider Australian community through English literacy and life administration programs that aim to reduce women’s economic and social isolation.

Buddha’s Light International Association of Victoria
For its work towards creating a harmonious community through the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding, and though the celebration of diversity.

Diversitat - Geelong Ethnic Communities Council
For its promotion of independence for older people by providing support and socialisation opportunities, including the delivery of an art project that brought together a group of Stolen Generation seniors with a group of refugee Karen and Karenni seniors.

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
For its work towards empowering people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate fully in Australian society through the delivery of a variety of community programs, art projects and events, including the Zinda Festival.

Multicultural Arts Victoria
For its leadership and commitment to the development and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity in the arts, working with local emerging, refugee and Aboriginal artists and communities and various government and community sector organisations across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

South Asia Times
For its reporting of issues affecting Indian and South Asian communities, particularly in relation to domestic violence, crime prevention, and the promotion of community harmony, interfaith, sports and entertainment events.

Whittlesea Community Connections
For its initiatives to support disadvantaged people and emerging communities in Melbourne’s outer north. Projects are designed for communities, by communities, with staff and volunteers coming from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Recent projects have addressed family violence, gender equity and responsible gambling.
INDIVIDUALS – PAID WORK

Ai Yun Liu
For founding the Chinese Culture School Australia in 1992, a language school which promotes Chinese culture, language and education to children of diverse backgrounds.

Aloke Kumar
For his contribution towards achieving intercultural understanding and community harmony and his fundraising efforts in response to the Nepalese earthquake in 2015.

Bassir Qadiri
For his work in delivering cultural awareness programs to both men and women in Afghan communities that promote gender equality, equity and the elimination of all types of violence against women.

Nagamuthu Ramalingam Wickiramasingham
For his leadership and dedicated service to Victoria’s multicultural community and work towards the preservation of Tamil culture, including the founding of the Victorian Tamil Cultural Association and Victorian Tamil Cultural School.

Yohana Jury
For her impactful work at the Centre for Multicultural Youth and City of Greater Dandenong, including the development of Victoria’s first LGBTIQ+ multicultural youth project, and the Creating Change project, which fosters meaningful connections between young people from diverse backgrounds.

INDIVIDUALS – VOLUNTARY WORK

Bandu Dissanayake
For his extensive contributions to multicultural media as a founding member of the Ethnic Public Broadcasting Association of Victoria, his involvement in the establishment of the Sinhala program on 3ZZZ radio, and his work as a volunteer broadcaster, in print media and service to the community through charitable organisations.

Bom Yonzon
For his tireless promotion of Nepalese culture through various festivals and events in Victoria, and his contribution to engaging the Nepalese community with numerous local councils and community sector organisations.

Chandana Imbulana
For his long-standing commitment to promoting social harmony, peace and intercultural understanding within the Sri Lankan community, other South Asian community groups and the wider community.

Christina Despoteris
For her leadership and dedication in engaging the community and promoting Greek culture through art, music, dance, history and the delivery of various initiatives.

Deepti Alurkar
For founding the ‘Mums Dance Club’, an initiative that educates, engages and empowers Victorian women, which in turn educates and empowers family and community.

Dilkie (Dilrukshie) Perera
For her leadership and dedication towards the promotion of Sri Lankan culture in Victoria, her work in uniting South Asian communities in business, cultural celebration and fundraising initiatives and support of multicultural youth.

Heidy Shiroma Vilasinie Linthotage Fernando
For her promotion and preservation of Sri Lankan culture in Victoria through radio broadcasting, and the production of musical concerts, television and radio drama programs, which have helped people stay connected to their heritage and reduced isolation, and her work towards health education in the community.

Leng Chaivathanatorn
For promoting Chinese culture, music and religion, his dedicated service to seniors, including help finding nursing homes, transportation and life administration tasks and his support in the settlement of new migrants.
Nalin Sharda
For his leadership and continued involvement in numerous community groups and creative initiatives, which have helped to preserve and share Indian culture and culturally and linguistically diverse literature, as well as helping seniors overcome isolation.

Naureen Choudhry
For her dedication to intercultural and interfaith understanding and work towards ensuring the voices of culturally and religiously diverse women and marginalised people are heard and community connection and harmony is strengthened.

Jazeer Nijamudeen
For co-founding the Muslim Legal Network and his commitment to multicultural youth affairs, including the organisation of sporting and social events for migrant youth in the Western suburbs, and providing mentoring and student housing assistance.

Nurten Kim Hasan
For her work as President of the Hampton Park Turkish Senior Citizens Group, through which she supports and advocates on behalf of seniors and brings together seniors from diverse cultural groups to practice English and help combat loneliness.

Puneet Gulati
For his work for various non-profit organisations and commitment to empowering diverse communities, with a strong focus on tackling violence, harassment and bullying.

Rohit Kumar
For his work as President of the Australian Indo Fijian Association of Victoria, which has supported communities both locally and overseas, with a particular focus on children with special needs.

Said A Said
For his dedication to the Somali community in Victoria through initiatives to reduce isolation amongst Elders, support young people through sport, and bring prominent Somali musicians and politicians to visit Australia.

Stephen Chew
For his widespread work towards promoting intercultural and interfaith harmony, including the implementation of several community and capacity building initiatives targeted at Chinese, other culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the wider community in Victoria.

Uma Vijai
For her work on community events to celebrate Hindu festivals, running multicultural music and dance activities for children with special needs, volunteering with her local council and fundraising for a range of causes.

Van Tu Tran
For his work as founder and Principal of THE-HE Vietnamese Language Centre, and his commitment to a new project to involve newly-arrived young people in the spirit of ANZAC Day.

Wendy Brown
For her valuable contributions as a member of Morwell’s International Women’s Group for the past 15 years, including providing free computer skills classes and helping fellow members with job applications and navigating government systems such as Centrelink.

Xiao Mei Zhou
For her many years of service as president of the Kensington Chinese Friendship group, where she organised activities for elderly Chinese public housing residents, encouraged their participation in community events and advocated for their interests.
Community Innovation Award

Recognises short term projects that use outside-the-box thinking to address a particular problem facing a diverse community, and which share knowledge about a culture with a wider audience.

**WINNER**

City of Melbourne – ‘Act of Translation’

Funded by the Victorian Government and led by the City of Melbourne, ‘Act of Translation’ was a theatre project involving local and international students from countries including China, Iraq, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Brazil and Colombia. The project began with weekly theatre workshops in March 2017 to help students communicate and explore their experiences and challenges, while also gaining skills in performance development.

The works were performed at the Melbourne Writers Festival, Library at The Dock, RMIT University and the Immigration Museum and were attended by more than 600 people. They aimed to challenge locals’ perceptions of international students, and vice versa. The project culminated in March 2018 with the launch of a documentary about the experience, made by filmmaker Irene Metter.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

Bonbeach Life Saving Club

Bonbeach Life Saving Club has sought to bridge the gap in water safety skills that exists between new migrants and refugees and people who have grown up around Australia’s beaches. Through the Multicultural Surf Rescue Certificate program, club volunteers are training migrants and refugees in surf lifesaving skills, with many participants going on to undertake further courses such as first aid or boat rescue. The club has also organised beach days for primary-school aged children from diverse backgrounds, with volunteers sourcing culturally-appropriate beach attire so that all the children can participate. These programs have fostered many new friendships and an increase in intercultural understanding between all involved.
POLICE ANNUAL MULTICULTURAL AWARD

Recognises police employees who have established relationships with multicultural communities by developing innovative strategies.

Senior Sergeant Marilyn Ross APM
Senior Sergeant Marilyn “Maz” Ross demonstrates an outstanding commitment to advancing police relationships with multicultural communities. Her work positively impacts many diverse communities, and it is for her exceptional work with the Sikh community that Senior Sergeant Ross is being recognised. Her outreach work towards Indian Australians has been strategically important particularly after attacks on Indian students in 2009 were brought to public attention by Victoria Police. She is to be commended for her contribution towards furthering these initiatives as the diverse Indian community grows rapidly in Victoria.

Senior Constable Carol Williams
As Manager of the Alcohol Diversion Program in the South-Eastern area of Melbourne, Senior Constable Carol Williams has been alert to the issues impacting recently arrived ethnic communities. She has worked extensively with groups such as Afri-Aus Care, M-power and Daughters of Jerusalem and has worked hard to educate immigrants and refugees of diverse cultural backgrounds about the use and abuse of alcohol and varying tolerance levels. Her work is not only educational but crime preventative, and worthy of particular mention is the outstanding success Senior Constable Williams has achieved with 78 specific clients.

Acting Senior Sergeant Adam Davy
Acting Senior Sergeant Adam Davy has played a key role in community engagement within the Monash municipality through his work at Oakleigh Police Station. The City of Monash is both culturally and religiously diverse and through his dedicated work and the implementation of various initiatives, he has built strong relationships with the local Islamic Centre and members of the African youth leadership program. Often going above and beyond, Acting Senior Sergeant Davy is committed to promoting cultural awareness and shows remarkable understanding and compassion for newly-arrived refugees who have come from often very harrowing situations.

Senior Constable Rebecca Millin
Senior Constable Rebecca Millin is the Crime Prevention Officer for the Whitehorse area. Over the past several years, she has undertaken much praiseworthy work with established and recently arrived culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and particularly with the Chinese community. Senior Constable Millin has worked productively with interpreters to deliver free innovative security audits for small businesses, often providing reassurance and support after a break in or other crime.

Senior Constable Matt Walker
Senior Constable Matt Walker’s contribution and dedication to various initiatives has had a beneficial impact upon Greater Shepparton and its multicultural community. He represents the trusted face of policing in the Goulburn Valley, an enviable title, and often works outside of his police hours. Of particular significance have been his participation in both the Shepparton Interfaith Network and the Hume Regional Advisory Council of the Victorian Multicultural Commission. He has also provided reassurance to local multicultural communities that have been impacted by overseas events, and has educated other police officers of their impact. Especially innovative and imaginative has been his work with Fisheries Victoria in their ‘Reach One, Teach a Dozen’ program, aimed at educating immigrant and refugee fishermen and women of Victoria’s fishing rules and regulations.
Senior Sergeant Efti Anastasiadis
Senior Sergeant Efti Anastasiadis is an excellent example of productive diversity, using his Greek-Australian identity, and bilingual and cultural skills to facilitate communication and understanding between Victoria Police and the Greek community. Of particular note has been his work with the Police Chaplain, his role in the celebration of police and policing at the Orthodox Cathedral in South Melbourne and his role in the Victorian Hellenic Police Association. Through his work, Senior Sergeant Anastasiadis reinforces the positive police profile within the community. He is a great example of what community policing is all about.

Inspector Clive Williams
Inspector Clive Williams has been instrumental in the successful delivery of numerous initiatives in multicultural and multi-faith affairs within the Eastern division, working closely with the community over many years. Most recently, he has worked with the South Sudanese community, supported the development of the new Rohingyaas Mosque, contributed as a member of the Gippsland Interfaith Network and undertaken a facilitative relationship with the Sikh community.

Senior Sergeant Eugene Kontos
Senior Sergeant Eugene Kontos has been a valuable member of Victoria Police for more than 28 years, playing a significant role in the development of multicultural policy in the context of policing. In addition to his outstanding work with the Greek community, which he has been dedicated to since 1996, Senior Sergeant Kontos has also successfully managed difficult cross-cultural situations such as the Pong Su incident in 2003 and an Egyptian bus crash in Cairo.

Lisa Gray
Lisa Gray has been the Eastern Region’s Community Engagement Advisor for more than a year, having a noticeable impact in this time, through the implementation of a new and esteemed newsletter, the ‘coffee with a cop’ initiative, her support of the African Australian Community Taskforce, and coordination of the region’s social cohesion program.

POLICE COMMUNITY EXEMPLARY AWARD
Recognises police, community groups or individuals who have developed innovative strategies and initiatives that promote positive relations between police and multicultural communities.

New Recruits - Geelong Police Youth Consultations
This social cohesion project titled New Recruits - Geelong Police Youth Consultations illustrates the possibility for dialogue and connectedness between police and culturally and linguistically diverse youth, particularly in the Norlane and Corio areas. It is a weekly program bringing together young people from new and emerging communities with forums, workshops and excursions to a soccer match, the police academy, a prison (as part of the schools program) and to the Grampians on a Dreamtime quest trip. It has built up participants’ self-esteem and sense of belonging, as well as their trust and confidence in local police and their capacity to make the right decisions.

North West Metro Muslim Reference Group
Established by Inspector Anthony Ryan in 2016, the North West Metro Muslim Reference Group is a very worthwhile and valuable police-community liaison initiative. Coming together at the Northcote Police Station, the meaningful work undertaken by this group illustrates a positive narrative of authentic and worthwhile dialogue between Victoria Police and the leaders of Islamic organisations.

Phulvinderjit Singh Grewal
Phulvinderjit Singh Grewal is recognised for his outstanding contribution as a community leader at the Sikh Gurdwarr in Craigieburn and with the Whittlesea Indian Consultation Group, working as a mediator between police and the community. After Whittlesea was identified as a hot spot for attacks on Indian students in
2009, Mr Grewal worked with Victoria Police to implement a safeguarding strategy. Especially important were his efforts in relation to the introduction of the Kirpan card and the exemption of the Kirpan under the Control of Weapons Act. Mr Grewal’s nomination highlights the crucial importance of local community leaders stepping up to the plate to resolve difficult and complex criminal, safeguarding and crime prevention issues.

Sam Atukorala
Sam Atukorala has played a key role in cultivating intercultural awareness in the Goulburn Valley region, initially through his work as a volunteer and more recently as a project coordinator for the Ethnic Communities Council. He has organised or helped to organise a wide array of community development initiatives and events in and around Shepparton in collaboration with Senior Sergeant Matt Walker. Mr Atukorala’s proactive approach to ensuring police involvement in such events, including in the sporting arena, is praiseworthy and his efforts have also earned him a significant local media profile.

POLICE MULTICULTURAL MEDIA AWARD

Recognises police employees who communicate police and multicultural issues via ethnic and/or mainstream media outlets.

First Constable Kenny Lin
First Constable Kenny Lin has played an invaluable role in reaching out to the Chinese community since becoming a Victorian Police Officer in 2014. Being of Chinese background, his contribution has proved vital in connecting Victoria’s expanding Chinese community and Victoria Police. First Constable Lin’s work also illustrates how Victoria Police is able to effectively utilise the local Chinese community media to communicate information on topics such personal and home safety, Chinese police recruitment and drive-safe videos for Chinese tourists.
Education and Early Childhood Award

Recognises outstanding educational practice which enhances intercultural understanding and meets the needs of students from diverse communities.

WINNER – EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Early Years Program

The Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture Inc. (also known as Foundation House) provides services to people from refugee backgrounds in Victoria who have experienced torture or other traumatic events in their country of origin or while fleeing those countries. Within Foundation House, the Early Years Program works to improve outcomes for children and families from refugee backgrounds by supporting Victorian early years services to work effectively for and with families of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

The Craigieburn Refugee Early Years Project works collaboratively with Local Government and local early years services to build the capacity of early childhood educators to provide inclusive and welcoming environments to newly arrived and refugee families and children, using family centred practices. The program includes a Community Advisory Project to facilitate monthly discussions between service providers and refugee families. The Community Advisory Project offers early years services invaluable insight into approaches to make their services more accessible to newly arrived and refugee families, while helping those families to become more knowledgeable of the range of early years services and support available.

By working in partnership with early years services and the newly arrived communities, the Craigieburn Refugee Early Years Project offers a positive, multifaceted response to support the educational and settlement needs of communities from migrant, asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds.
WINNER – SCHOOL EDUCATION

Croydon Primary School

Through consultation and responsiveness, Croydon Primary School is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its community of predominately Burmese refugees: Falam, Karen, Zomi, and Hakha Chin. To create new avenues for communication while also building capacity of teachers to understand the perspectives of the school’s refugee community, Croydon Primary School employs a dedicated wellbeing/refugee coordinator, multicultural aides for each language group, as well as two teachers from refugee backgrounds.

The school has consulted with students and parents to identify key areas for focussed support. Over the last two years Croydon Primary School has partnered with EACH Health to address a priority need of improved dental health in the refugee student community, proactively designing activities that support the involvement of parents, such as providing interpreters for promotional events and having a Multicultural Education Aide and the English as an Additional Language teacher accompany parents and students on an excursion to the dentist.

Croydon Primary School is further responding to requests from their parent community through the development and implementation of a Prep to Year 6 sexuality education program, supported by comprehensive parent information sessions in each community language group prior to delivery. Acknowledging the critical importance of mental health and the unique challenges faced by some within the school community, the school initiated partnerships with the Resilience Project and Foundation House to improve teacher capacity and to engage with parents and students on mental health issues.

Croydon Primary School is sharing its experiences across the wider school community, striving to build the intercultural capabilities of educators, teachers and support staff working in all schools, and improve the educational and settlement needs of communities from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
Youth Award

Recognises the outstanding contributions young people make to a diverse and inclusive Victoria.

WINNER

Sam Shlansky

As an Indonesian Studies student at Monash University, Sam Shlansky has created many opportunities for multicultural engagement between Indonesian students and locals and has actively supported international students to make the most of their education and experience in Victoria. Through his community work, Mr Shlansky has paid attention to two often marginalised groups: young women and people from regional areas. As president of Australia Indonesia Youth Association he worked closely with members to identify young women with leadership potential and championed them to take on larger roles. In 2017 the group piloted its regional outreach by running the Festival Bahasa dan Budaya Indonesia in Bendigo, and Mr Shlansky has successfully arranged a venue, logistics and local partners to run the festival in Warrnambool in 2018.

Mr Shlansky is also involved with the Marco Polo Project, a cross-cultural education organisation, where he has risen up to play a pivotal role - engaging new partners, rebranding one of the organisation’s key projects and expanding its delivery online and into regional areas.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Elvis Martin

Twenty-three-year-old Elvis Martin is a social justice advocate with a focus on young people, mental health, homelessness and LGBTIQ+ rights. He uses his personal story of seeking protection in Australia, and the challenges he has faced along the way, to educate and inspire change on both a personal and a policy level.

Mr Martin was nominated twice for a Multicultural Award for Excellence this year, with one nominator - an international student - writing of how he had met Mr Martin at the Study Melbourne centre where he was educating students on their rights in Australia. The student was experiencing financial hardship and was suicidal, and confided in Mr Martin, who took him to hospital, connected him to services and advocated to his university on his behalf. The other person to nominate Mr Martin noted that his previously negative perception of LGBTIQ+ people had been completely turned around by the speeches he had heard Mr Martin give to multicultural communities about LGBTIQ+ issues.

Mr Martin was recently appointed as Melbourne City Council’s first ever youth advisor on homelessness and an R U OK? Ambassador.

Sajda Yasmim Yakub

Sajda Yakub is a law and commerce student at Deakin University with a long list of volunteer credentials. Using her legal studies background she has been assisting vulnerable women and young people from multicultural backgrounds by volunteering at the Women’s Legal Centre, Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre, the Islamic Council of Victoria, Amnesty International and Greater Dandenong Council. She has also volunteered at the Muslim Legal Network where she ran legal education seminars for students and professionals about family violence, family law and child protection.
Media Award

Recognises outstanding reporting of issues of importance to diverse communities, and reporting which contributes to Victorians’ cross-cultural understanding.

WINNER

Benjamin Millar

Maribyrnong Weekly journalist Benjamin Millar has been reporting news in Melbourne’s Western suburbs since 2010, and has been a strong voice of reason in this year’s media narrative around “African gangs”. In January he published a series of viral tweets, highlighting the many crimes he had covered over the years, and how few of them were committed by African-Australians. His Twitter thread went on to discuss how crime can and should be reported without unnecessarily citing race, and was shared thousands of times on social media and in online news articles.

Mr Millar subsequently wrote articles for The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald and Meanjin, and has participated in a number of panel discussions on the topic. Members of the African-Australian community have indicated that Millar’s viral Twitter thread was a turning point in the debate and an important intervention in what was fast becoming a damaging narrative.

HIGHERY COMMENDED

Eugenia Pavlopoulou

Eugenia Pavlopoulou has worked in the Greek-language media for almost two decades, first at Radio 3AB in the early 2000s, and now at Neos Kosmos – Australia’s widest circulating Greek newspaper – where she has worked as a journalist and editor for the past 16 years. Her work shines a light on issues often overlooked in mainstream media, and keeps first generation Greek-Australians – who may otherwise be isolated because of their age and language abilities – up to date with both Australian and Greek news.

A decade ago Ms Pavlopoulou lead the development of Neos Kosmos’ website, and she has stabilised the newspaper’s future by creating content in English and Greek that will appeal to a new generation of readers. For example Ms Pavlopoulou has recently been investigating and writing about the uncertain future of the Modern Greek program at La Trobe University, which is the only tertiary modern Greek language program in Victoria.
Multicultural Business Award

Recognises businesses which provide outstanding service to multicultural communities in Victoria and are leading the way in encouraging diversity in their workplaces.

WINNER

Victoria University

Victoria University is renowned for its culturally diverse student body and staff and its commitment to maximising opportunities for people from multicultural backgrounds to engage in tertiary education, industry and the broader community.

This year the university launched a detailed Cultural Diversity Strategy to advance and celebrate the rich diversity of perspectives, approaches and understandings that underlie multiculturalism. Initiatives include the Intercultural Teaching Excellence Program; a multicultural mentoring program in collaboration with CommBank; the Thrive program for refugee and asylum seeker students; the establishment of a Cultural Diversity Reference Group; collaborative community partnerships; and an extensive calendar of events to celebrate days of significance.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Billard Leece Partnership

Billard Leece Partnership (BLP) is an architectural studio employing a team of more than 130 people from at least 23 different countries and cultures. The studio has a strong belief in the benefits of diversity and collaboration for innovation. Many of their staff are migrants with significant experience in their home and surrounding countries, while others started with the firm on student placements and were supported by BLP to apply for permanent residency. BLP has also employed international staff through a supportive refugee experience scheme.

The company works with and designs buildings for a diverse range of users and inhabitants, such as the culturally-diverse seniors who will inhabit the new Blue Cross aged care centre in Box Hill and a new public housing project in Preston. BLP also contributes to overseas projects – such as the Hong Kong Children’s Hospital – which requires them to design culturally appropriate environments.
Government and Civic Leadership Award

Recognises government bodies for major initiatives that meet the needs of their culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities.

**WINNER**

**Moreland City Council**

Moreland is one of the few councils in Australia to adopt a Social Cohesion Plan. The plan is a result of years of research the council has undertaken to identify priority communities which are at risk of exclusion and discrimination that could lead to social problems. The research has been undertaken in partnership with the Islamic Council of Victoria, RMIT University and neighbouring Hume City Council, and focuses on the culturally diverse suburbs of Fawkner (Moreland) and Broadmeadows (Hume).

Under the plan, the council is supporting Fawkner Neighbourhood House to deliver a range of projects to ensure marginalised communities are included in community life and have ample employment opportunities. Projects include monthly welcome dinners, work placements, personal and professional mentoring, leadership training and civics and citizenship education.

The council has also funded the Stepping Stones Program, which helps refugees and disadvantaged migrants to start small businesses.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**Level Crossing Removal Authority - Training for the Future Program**

The Level Crossing Removal Authority leads a Victorian Government initiative called Training for the Future (TFTF), which aims to ensure there are enough people with the right skills to deliver an unprecedented amount of work on the Melbourne rail network over the next ten years and beyond. Another of TFTF’s core aims is to provide training and work opportunities for people from disadvantaged communities, including refugees. TFTF exists to ensure the rail and public transport workforce of the future is reflective of the cultural diversity of rail users and of the Victorian population more generally.

As part of TFTF, eight paid internships are offered each year to mid-career professionals from refugee backgrounds, and 44 paid internships are offered each year to university students from disadvantaged backgrounds (including refugees). There is also a five-day program to introduce people from disadvantaged backgrounds to the different opportunities available in the sector.

The Level Crossing Removal Authority also sets inclusion targets for its contractors, whereby they are obligated and rewarded for their employment of people from culturally diverse communities.
Premier’s Award for Community Harmony

Recognises an individual or organisation whose work has brought together different cultural or religious groups to increase understanding, acceptance and cooperation.

WINNER

Tara Rajkumar OAM

Tara Rajkumar OAM is an artistic director, choreographer, teacher and performer of Indian classical dance. Raised in New Delhi, Mrs Rajkumar moved to the UK where she founded the National Academy of Indian Dance before settling in Australia in 1983.

In recent years she has curated a number of projects and performances for the Light in Winter Festival at Federation Square. As well as the South Asian cultural performances she has led, Mrs Rajkumar has also worked with Aboriginal communities to develop a Welcome to Country around the festival’s sacred Leempeeyt Weeyn Campfire.

Mrs Rajkumar has fostered cross-cultural awareness through hundreds of lectures, workshops and performances at schools and community events throughout metropolitan and regional Australia. In one such project she worked with primary school students to create a reinterpretation of J R R Tolkien’s The Hobbit through Indian classical dance, while in another the students put on an English-language performance of the Indian epic Ramayana.

Mrs Rajkumar has also helped children of Indian origin who have been adopted by Australian parents to stay connected to their heritage through dance.
Emerging Leadership in Multiculturalism Award

Recognising a newly-arrived migrant or refugee who is a leader in their community and volunteers their time towards initiatives which strengthen our multicultural state.

**WINNER**

**Nancy Loomba**

Nancy Loomba is of Indian origin and settled in Victoria in 2012. She has been actively involved in a number of events to bring the community together and has shown great leadership in promoting multiculturalism. She is a multicultural ambassador for the AFL and Cricket Victoria and has worked with Victoria Police and Leadership Victoria bringing together young leaders from diverse communities to address issues of disengagement and to celebrate diversity. As Media Manager of the Brother and Sisters Foundation, Ms Loomba also initiated a program in collaboration with Positive Partnership to target the stigma around autism in South Asian communities in Victoria.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**Preeti Daga**

Since arriving in Australia in 2008, Preeti Daga has been a strong advocate for diversity and gender equality through her work with organisations such as the Australia India Business Council Victoria (AIBC), Bully Zero Foundation, the AFL and Cricket Australia. She has organised outreach programs to encourage South Asian communities’ participation in sport and was pivotal in driving the success of the 2017 AFL Multicultural Round and Melbourne Football Club’s 2018 Welcome Game.

As Vice President of the AIBC, Ms Daga has been at the forefront of promoting trade and business relations between Victoria and India. In the last two years she has organised more than 15 events, working with the Indian Consul General, Victorian Government, federal agencies such as Austrade and various Indian state governments.

**Bwe Thay**

Bwe Thay is a strong community advocate for new and emerging refugee communities. Since arriving in Australia in 2009 as a refugee from Burma he has held a number of community roles including Vice President of the Communities' Council on Ethnic Issues, Co-Chair of the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, Multicultural Ambassador for the Mental Health Foundation of Australia, member of the Refugee Tertiary Education Committee and member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Southern Metropolitan Regional Advisory Council.

Mr Thay has also been involved with the Refugee Council of Australia in a variety of roles. He currently works as a Migrant Student and Community Liaison Officer at Swinburne University of Technology, where he supports refugees to access higher education and helps universities better open their doors to refugees.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Victorian Government, Victorian Multicultural Commission and Victoria Police thank all who participated in Victoria’s 2018 Multicultural Awards for Excellence; the presenters, nominators, referees and most of all, the recipients.

We also thank Her Excellency the Hon Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria and Mr Howard for hosting Victoria’s 2018 Multicultural Awards for Excellence ceremony at Government House.

A special thank you is extended to Aleyna Altinors and the musicians who have volunteered their time and talent to entertaining guests at the ceremony.

Aleyna Altinors

Aleyna Altinors is a Year 8 student at Sirius College who has interests in writing, drama, music and singing. Aleyna’s interest in poetry grew when her Year 7 teacher asked her to write a sonnet about her faith and she has been enjoying writing even since.

Highvale Secondary College Chamber Strings Ensemble

The Chamber Strings Ensemble from Glen Waverley’s Highvale Secondary College was established in 2013 under the direction of music teacher Janet Govan. A group of passionate young musicians, they perform regularly at school concerts and out in the wider community. Over the last three years they have enjoyed the opportunity to entertain guests at a variety of functions at Government House. They play a diverse range of music styles, incorporating a blend of classical, Celtic, contemporary and ethnic music into their program.
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