

**Working Document**

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# The Australian Standard for Welcoming Cities

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# Introduction

## **Australia is a multicultural success story.**

Our standards of living and levels of social cohesion rank among the highest in the world. Australia's population is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse, while Indigenous Australians and the First Nations peoples of this country represent (more than 250 language groups) and the oldest continuous culture.

Over the next 35 years, it is anticipated that migration will maintain sustainable population growth, and drive economic and skills growth in Australia. Migration is projected to:

- Contribute \$1.6 trillion to Australia's GDP
- Lead to a 60 per cent increase in the population with a university education
- Add almost 16 per cent to the workforce participation rate

Migration and settlement also solves a massive problem for the 100 regional and rural towns across Australia who are grappling with significant population and economic decline. Migration will help them to:

- Increase local populations and add to the cultural vibrancy
- Revitalise local businesses and services
- Attract increased funding and investment

However, we cannot afford to rest on historical success and it would be naïve to assume that migration trends might continue by default.

## **The continued success of multicultural Australia will depend on our ability to foster social cohesion as our population and cultural diversity grows.**

Although local councils are best placed to understand the complexity and diversity of their communities, they often engage in this work with limited resources and support. We have created *The Australian Standard for Welcoming Cities* to support local councils and their communities in the advancement of Australia as a welcoming, prosperous and cohesive nation.

# Welcoming Cities

## Vision

A network of welcoming and cohesive cities and regions where everyone can belong and participate in social, economic and civic life.

## Mission

Supporting local councils and community leaders to leverage the ideas and innovation that come from being welcoming and inclusive.

## Objectives

1. Receiving communities are welcoming and actively engage with migrant communities.
2. Local councils have comprehensive plans and active messaging for cultural diversity and inclusion in policy, multi-sector engagement, activities and economic development approaches.
3. Local councils and community stakeholders have networks and resources that facilitate effective planning for welcoming and inclusion.
4. Local councils are committed to facilitating a whole-of-community approach to building social & cultural inclusion, economic engagement and civic participation.

Welcoming Cities supports local councils and community leaders through a network built around:



### Knowledge Sharing

Supporting local councils and communities to learn from each other and access resources, research, policies, and case studies.



### Partnership Development

Brokering meaningful multi-sector partnerships that foster a sense of belonging and participation for all members of the community.



### Celebrating Success

Showcasing leading practice through case studies and a national award that acknowledges welcoming efforts.



### Standard + Accreditation

Setting the National Standard for cultural diversity and inclusion policy and practice in Local Government.

Local councils participate as **members** of the Welcoming Cities network, while community organisations, businesses and other government agencies can get involved as **supporters**. Both members and supporters access key offerings of the network.

Building social cohesion requires contribution and collaboration from all community stakeholders and the role of local councils is to invite and facilitate this interaction.

# The Standard

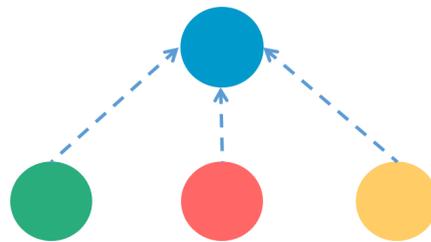
## Scope

*The Australian Standard for Welcoming Cities* is a central element of the Welcoming Cities network.

The Standard establishes the framework for local councils to:

- benchmark their cultural diversity and inclusion policies and practices across the organisation;
- identify where and how further efforts could be directed; and,
- assess progress over time.

The other elements of the network support as well as enhance the purpose of the Standard.



**The Standard is applicable to all local councils in Australia.** This includes cities, shires, towns, or municipalities. Councils can access and progress through the Standard according to their capacity and resources. We describe these stages (from lowest to highest) as **Established**, **Advanced**, **Excelling**, and **Mentoring**. (see Assessment, p. 17)

The extent to which local councils measure their activity against the Standard will be based on their understanding of their community's needs. It is noted that local councils are already addressing elements of the Standard. The Standard validates existing efforts and recognises the connections to fostering cultural diversity and inclusion.

# Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

## **culturally diverse groups**

Individuals, groups and communities that are indicative of the cultural and linguistic diversity of people in the local council area.

## **local council/s**

The municipal authority for a local government area (LGA) that is being assessed against the Standard. Local councils can include cities, shires, towns, or municipalities.

## **migrant/s, migrant community/ies**

Individuals of any immigration status born overseas. They can include culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, refugees, people seeking asylum, and temporary or permanent residents.

## **receiving community/ies**

All Australian-born residents not covered under the definition of *migrant community*. This includes Indigenous communities and previous generations of migrants.

## **social cohesion**

The willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. Social cohesion broadly incorporates 5 domains:

- belonging;
- social justice and equity;
- participation;
- acceptance and rejection legitimacy; and,
- worth.

## **social inclusion**

The act of enabling all groups of people within a society to have a sense of belonging and to be able to participate in community life. It is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.

## **substantive equality**

Principles that seek to address systemic discrimination in service delivery; recognising that policies and practices put in place to suit the majority of clients may appear to be non-discriminatory but may not address the specific needs of certain groups of people. In effect they may be indirectly discriminatory, creating systemic discrimination.

## **volunteering**

Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

## **Welcoming City**

A local council that has committed to, communicated, planned, built and/or sustained a welcoming community; and is assessed and accredited as such.

# A Guide to Reading the Standard

The Standard is organised under the following six (6) categories:

1. Leadership
2. Social and Cultural Inclusion
3. Economic Development
4. Learning and Skills Development
5. Civic Participation
6. Places and Spaces

Each category contains principles, criteria and indicators that can be applied by a local council through existing or new policies and practices.

The Standard is also framed around the local council as a facilitator of community stakeholders. It is expected that criteria will often be met through the support of, or collaboration with, local stakeholders.

[Diagram: Key elements of the Standard – **Category, Principles, Criterion, Indicator**]

# 1.0 Leadership

Welcoming Cities respectfully acknowledge the past, present and future traditional owners of the land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the traditional custodians of this land, and respect their culture and identity which has been a continuum with the land and sea for generations.

Welcoming Cities seek to engage local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as leaders in welcoming activities.

Welcoming Cities recognise the importance of cultural diversity and inclusion and seek to advance and institutionalise that work through collaboration across council, the local community and other government agencies.

Welcoming Cities engage receiving communities in understanding who their new neighbours are and why welcoming work is important.

Welcoming Cities bring together the voices and experiences of both receiving and migrant communities in defining a welcoming agenda and platform.

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## 1.1 The local council recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of this Nation and seek to engage local Indigenous communities in welcoming work.

*Demonstrated by:*

- 1.11 Actively working towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.
- 1.12 Formally acknowledging Traditional Owners through collaboration with elders past, present and future in policies, initiatives and public events.
- 1.13 Facilitating opportunities for migrant communities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

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## 1.2 The local council partners with diverse stakeholders to promote a welcoming culture through advocacy and communication activities across various platforms.

*Demonstrated by:*

- 1.21 A public resolution declaring the local council to be a welcoming community, and an explanation of what this means.
- 1.22 Messaging that communicates the community-wide benefit of cultural diversity and inclusion and the benefits of migration and settlement.
- 1.23 Presenting narratives that communicate positive migrant stories and contributions.
- 1.24 Supporting and promoting events and activities representative of the diversity of the local community.

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## 1.3 The local council supports and promotes activities and initiatives that nurture connections between migrant and receiving communities.

*Demonstrated by:*

- 1.31 Supporting activities and initiatives that connect people from migrant communities and people from receiving communities.
- 1.32 Identifying and facilitating opportunities that bring together representatives from migrant communities and receiving communities to discuss community issues.

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## 1.4 The local council incorporates cultural diversity and inclusion in strategic, business and community plans and monitors their progress.

*Demonstrated by:*

- 1.41 Engaging diverse stakeholders, from both migrant communities and receiving communities, in the development, implementation and maintenance of the plans.
- 1.42 Developing a stakeholder reference group that reflects the diversity of the community.
- 1.43 Assessing the priorities of the local community and using that feedback to improve the plans.

## 2.0 Social and Cultural Inclusion

**Welcoming Cities facilitate relationships between migrant and receiving communities that address racism and promote social cohesion.**

**Welcoming Cities ensure that all residents have equitable access to council services and cultural assets by removing barriers to participation in community life.**

**Welcoming Cities facilitate diverse cultural expression and support residents to participate in the community.**

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### **2.1 The local council's policies and practices actively include and engage both receiving and migrant communities.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 2.11 Collecting and analysing demographic data to determine the cultural, religious and linguistic composition of the local community.
- 2.12 Ensuring that the development, implementation and review of council policies, strategies, programs and initiatives are compliant with Federal and State legislation for racial and religious non-discrimination and take into account the principles of substantive equality.
- 2.13 Conducting reviews to identify and revise any policies or practices that exclude or disenfranchise migrant communities.
- 2.14 Providing accessible information on, or referral to, community support services and programs.
- 2.15 Supporting initiatives that empower individuals to prevent, and respond effectively to, racism and discrimination.

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### **2.2 The local council facilitates diverse cultural expression through a range of activities and observances.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 2.21 Celebrating community festivals, cultural events, and religious observances that represent diversity and encourage dialogue.
- 2.22 Encouraging programs and initiatives that bring together diverse cultures and support opportunities for cultural expression and intercultural understanding.

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### **2.3 The local council facilitates language access.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 2.31 Assessing language needs for migrant communities to increase access to services and activities.
- 2.32 Engaging accredited translators or interpreters in council services and related events.
- 2.33 Providing information on council services, and resident information guides in community languages.
- 2.34 Providing accessible Council feedback and complaints processes.
- 2.35 Providing accessible information on dispute resolution and local by-laws.
- 2.36 Advocating to State Government and other agencies to ensure that emergency management information is accessible to migrant communities.

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### **2.4 The local council partners with government, business and community stakeholders to promote affordable, safe and accessible housing, health, justice and transport services for all residents.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 2.41 Referral to accessible information on, and promotion of, preventative health programs, public health risks, and community recreational activities.
- 2.42 Advising stakeholders in the development of local community housing and affordable housing initiatives.
- 2.43 Advising stakeholders and transport services to identify accessible and affordable transportation services.
- 2.44 Advising the local police service to build positive connections with migrant communities through crime prevention information sessions and community liaison.

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**2.5 The local council is committed to embedding broader diversity and inclusion approaches across the organisation and recognises that there are often additional barriers faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women from migrant backgrounds, people living with disability, and/or people who identify as LGBTI.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 2.51 Cross-council initiatives and strategies that address barriers to access and inclusion and the additional challenges of cross-sectionality in policy and practice, across a range of areas.

## 3.0 Economic Development

**Welcoming Cities recognise that economic growth relies on an inclusive economy that encourages the active participation of all its residents.**

**Welcoming Cities facilitate access, by both receiving and migrant communities, to opportunities for employment, business development and entrepreneurship.**

**Welcoming Cities value the unique talents and experiences that people of all backgrounds contribute to their communities.**

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### **3.1 The local council employs a workforce that is inclusive and diverse.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 3.11 Identifying and addressing barriers and unconscious bias, which may limit diversity and inclusion in employment practices.
- 3.12 Highlighting the value of a diverse workforce and encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply.
- 3.13 Exploring innovative ways of promoting job opportunities to reach a broad and diverse range of potential applicants.

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### **3.2 The local council advances local business sourcing and contracting.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 3.21 Addressing the barriers for local businesses to access council tendering and contracting opportunities.
- 3.22 Reviewing procurement policies and practice and identifying opportunities to engage local suppliers.

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### **3.3 The local council partners with the local business community to identify strategic opportunities for economic development and to encourage local jobs for local people, including those from migrant communities.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 3.31 Supporting and facilitating networking events, business development workshops, mentoring and other activities that grow local skills, knowledge and commerce.
- 3.32 Partnering with employers, local chambers of commerce, financial institutions, employment services, and other relevant community based organisations to identify needs and opportunities.
- 3.33 Supporting and advocating for strategies to monitor and prevent labour exploitation.
- 3.34 Working with employers, local chambers of commerce and other relevant community based organisations to identify and address barriers to local employment.

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### **3.4 The local council supports both receiving and migrant communities to advance economic development opportunities.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 3.41 Supporting and referring to business incubator, entrepreneurship programs and other initiatives to identify and grow enterprise opportunities.
- 3.42 Supporting and promoting cultural initiatives and activities that draw visitors to the community.

## 4.0 Learning and Skills Development

Welcoming Cities support both receiving and migrant communities to develop the skills, assets, and opportunities required to foster social cohesion.

Welcoming Cities facilitate partnerships with, and referrals to, local service providers that value learning and inclusion.

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**4.1 The local council works closely with community facilities such as schools and libraries to support learning and inclusion for migrant communities.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 4.11 Advocating for and supporting programs and initiatives that connect migrant communities diverse to existing support services including education, health, and settlement services.
- 4.12 Facilitating programs and initiatives that ensure library and/or related services are accessible, and support targeted learning opportunities for migrant communities.
- 4.13 Supporting learning and skills development opportunities for children and young people from migrant communities through collaboration with schools and other services.

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**4.2 The local council encourages learning and skills development opportunities that enable people from migrant communities to participate in community life.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 4.21 Referral to information on English language learning opportunities.
  - 4.22 Encouraging and supporting programs and initiatives that provide opportunities for migrant and receiving communities to share their history, ideas, knowledge and experience to grow cultural understanding.
  - 4.23 Identifying and delivering professional development for council staff that increases their capacity and skills to engage with and respond appropriately and effectively to the needs of a culturally diverse community.
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## 5.0 Civic Participation

Welcoming Cities actively encourage all residents to participate in civic life.

Welcoming Cities identify opportunities to engage people such that civic leadership reflects the diversity of the community.

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**5.1 The local council communicates their roles and responsibilities, and advances civic participation for both receiving and migrant communities.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 5.11 Providing accessible information on the role and responsibilities of local councils and civic engagement opportunities.
- 5.12 Encouraging and supporting the participation of culturally diverse groups in public council meetings and forums.
- 5.13 Promoting and supporting the participation of representatives from culturally diverse groups, including young people and seniors, in council committees, advisory and reference groups.
- 5.14 Encouraging constituents from culturally diverse backgrounds to consider running for council.

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**5.2 The local council supports and celebrates the attainment of citizenship.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 5.21 Promoting information about pathways and processes for obtaining Australian Citizenship to migrant communities.
- 5.22 Hosting, promoting and celebrating citizenship ceremonies.

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**5.3 The local council supports all eligible residents to enrol to vote and participate in local government elections.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 5.31 Working with the State Government and/or Electoral Commissions to eliminate barriers to voting.

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**5.4 The local council supports people from both receiving and migrant communities to participate in volunteering.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 5.41 Identifying and supporting volunteering opportunities that engage people from migrant communities and receiving communities, in order to encourage dialogue and relationship building.

## 6.0 Places and Spaces

Welcoming Cities value public spaces and facilities that enhance liveability, social cohesion and inclusion of all residents.

Welcoming Cities engage all community members in design processes for urban planning.

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**6.1 The local council ensures that public spaces and facilities are safe and accessible to all residents.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 6.11 Consulting with culturally diverse groups to explore how council spaces and facilities may be more accessible, inclusive, and responsive to community needs and aspirations.
- 6.12 Assessing development applications against non-discriminatory access requirements regulated under the Building Code of Australia, and guidelines under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 6.13 Ensuring that both receiving and migrant communities are consulted in the urban planning process.

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**6.2 Public spaces and facilities encourage community interaction, and facilitate diverse cultural expression and celebration.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 6.21 Enabling the use of public spaces and facilities by people who represent the diversity of the community.

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**6.3 The local council works to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and migrant heritage in public spaces and facilities.**

*Demonstrated by:*

- 6.31 Supporting initiatives that communicate the significance of cultural stories in public spaces and facilities.

# Assessment

The table below illustrates how a local council can move through the different stages of *Welcoming*. Local councils will be re-evaluated every 3 years.

Councils will be able to consult with experts to help them implement the policies and practices required to improve their standing as a Welcoming City.

Stage	Implementation	Evidence	Validation	Assessment
<p><b>Committed</b> A Committed local council has publicly stated their intent to champion the principles of Welcoming. Committed local councils join a network of like-minded peers, and gain the benefit of support and experience to chart their progress and identify the next steps towards becoming a Welcoming City.</p>	Nil	Commitment form	Signed by either the Mayor or CEO and submitted to Welcoming Cities	Nil
<p><b>Established</b> An Established Welcoming City has taken action towards becoming a more connected and cohesive community. Established Welcoming Cities have cemented their status as a key member of the network and driver of cultural change. They have a clear assessment of their current position.</p>	Criteria and indicators of the Leadership category are met	Plan in place to meet further criteria and indicators	Signed by Mayor and CEO and submitted to Welcoming Cities	Self Assessment
<p><b>Advanced</b> An Advanced Welcoming City is celebrating success in initiatives and policies that foster economic, social and cultural inclusion. Advanced Welcoming Cities are projecting their reputation as a leader of the sector and are prominent members of the network.</p>	Criteria and indicators of the following categories are met: 1. Leadership 2. Social & Cultural Inclusion 3. Economic Development	Documented policies, programs or initiatives to meet criteria and indicators  Plan in place to sustain existing criteria as well as meet further criteria and indicators	Signed by Mayor and CEO and countersigned by the CEO of an agreed and matched peer <i>Mentoring</i> council	Peer Assessment

<p><b>Excelling</b> An Excelling Welcoming City is setting and achieving targets across its full range of services and partnerships. Excelling Welcoming cities are achieving at a high level, and serve as an example of success for other councils.</p>	<p>Criteria and indicators of all categories are met</p>	<p>External assessor has viewed all documented policies, programs or initiatives and spoken to all policy, program or initiative 'owners'  Welcoming Plan (or similar) in place.</p>	<p>Recommendation from approved WC assessor</p>	<p>Formal External Assessment</p>
<p><b>Mentoring</b> A Mentoring Welcoming City is confidently embedding the framework and its principles across the organisation. Mentoring Welcoming Cities lead the sector by example, lending their considerable expertise to build the capacity of their peers.</p>	<p>Sustaining the criteria and indicators of all categories with evidence of innovative and positive impact</p>	<p>External assessor has viewed all documented policies, programs or initiatives and spoken to all policy, program or initiative 'owners'  Welcoming Plan (or similar) in place.  Tangible evidence is provided of innovative and positive impact e.g. community surveys</p>	<p>Recommendation from approved WC assessor</p>	<p>Formal External Assessment</p>

# Development and Accreditation

The International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance defines a Standard as a “document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory”.

ISEAL views a Standard as a powerful market-based approach for creating positive social, environmental, and economic change, and driving transformation in how entities deliver goods and/or services. A Standard defines what is expected and sustainable for a particular sector, drives and maintains change with a verification process, and has additional tools and activities in place for tracing certified goods and/or services. Through all of this, a Standard brings together all entities in the ecosystem and builds their capacity as they move from baseline to higher performance standards.

**Standards are living documents that reflect societal understanding of good practice for a given sector or industry. As such, the Standard will evolve over time.** New insights gained from implementation of the standard, plus increased interest from stakeholders due to uptake of the Standard, will yield new knowledge and improvements that need to be integrated into the Standard’s requirements. Common practice is to review a standard every three to five years.

The development of *The Australian Standard for Welcoming Cities* has been guided by ISEAL’s Codes of Good Practice and Credibility Principles. Welcoming Cities is working with ISEAL to validate the Standard’s compliance.

In the development of this Standard, Welcoming Cities has extensively consulted international, national and local stakeholders, including peak bodies, government associations, commissions and all tiers of government.

# References

The following documents and research have informed the development of this Standard.

Australian Government Department of Social Services 2016, [National Settlement Framework](#).

Centre for Multicultural Youth 2007, [Inclusive Local Government](#).

Cities of Migration 2017, [Building Inclusive Cities](#).

Cultural Development Network 2016, [Framework for Cultural Development Planning](#).

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Scanlon Foundation 2016, [Australians Today](#).

Victorian Government 2015, [Strategic Framework to Strengthen Victoria's Social Cohesion and the Resilience of its Communities](#).

Welcoming America 2017, [The Welcoming Standard and Certified Welcoming](#).

# Advisory Committee

[To be included]

# Acknowledgments

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[Complete list to be finalised]

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Cities of Migration  
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Immigration NZ  
Municipal Association of Victoria  
Office of Multicultural Interests, Western Australia  
Reconciliation Australia  
Refugee Council of Australia  
Settlement Council of Australia  
Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian Government  
Welcoming America