BOROONDARA

Consultation report

May 2024

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Introduction

The following report provides an overview of the methodology to inform the development of the draft Boroondara Multicultural Action Plan 2024-26. It also provides an overview of how many people we heard from and the key findings from the consultation in 2023 and 2024 that informed the development of the themes, strategic objectives, programs and key actions in the draft Boroondara Multicultural Action Plan 2024-26.

Overview of research and consultation methodology

The development of the draft Plan was informed by four stages of consultation and research including:

- Stage 1 - Evaluation of the previous Plan
- Stage 2 - Research and benchmarking
- Stage 3 - Community and service provider consultation
- Stage 4 - Draft Plan development.

The opportunity to participate in the community consultation was promoted extensively using a variety of accessible communication methods and tools. These are outlined in further detail in Stage 3.

Stage 1 – Evaluation of the previous Plan

An evaluation was undertaken of the progress, outcomes and learnings from the Boroondara Multicultural Action Plan 2019-23. This identified that 26 of the actions were completed, one was in progress, and one was no longer relevant. It found departments across the organisation had embedded practices to support the inclusion and participation of multicultural communities in their programs and services. It also identified that Council could continue to identify ways to improve how it communicates with multicultural communities, so community members are aware of the services, programs and facilities available to them.

Stage 2 – Research and benchmarking

Australian Census and other relevant data related to multiculturalism and inclusion were reviewed. Key research, reports, plans and legislation were also assessed, including the 2023 Mapping Social Cohesion report by the Scanlon Institute and documents from the Welcoming Cities initiative. For information about the demographics of Boroondara's multicultural community please see the Community Profile of Multicultural Boroondara.

Benchmarking was performed against the Victorian Multicultural Policy Statement and multicultural documents of other councils. Of the 11 multicultural plans reviewed, common actions were identified relating to communication, cultural awareness training, intercultural and interfaith dialogues, cultural diversity celebrations and anti-racism initiatives.

Stage 3 – Community and service provider consultation

There was an initial phase of consultation with community and service providers between late March and July 2023.

Between 29 March and 7 May 2023, community members were invited to complete a short survey. The opportunity to participate was promoted extensively through Council's communication channels, multicultural community groups and organisations, and Council's networks including the Boroondara Interfaith Network and the Cultural Champions. Council also attended 19 gatherings or meetings of cultural groups, multicultural seniors groups and faith groups to promote the survey and to invite feedback.

To maximise reach to people from multicultural communities, a variety of accessible communication methods and tools were used to enable people to participate in the community consultation. This included:

- an online and paper plain language survey
- the ability to complete the survey online in the following languages: Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, Persian and Japanese
- the ability to complete the paper survey in languages other than English
- videos promoting the community survey in five languages other than English (Mandarin, Cantonese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese).

Between April and July 2023, service providers and community organisations providing services to multicultural community members were invited to complete an online survey. The survey sought feedback about the multicultural communities who access their services along with the communication methods used to communicate with multicultural communities. Feedback was also sought on the challenges that people from multicultural backgrounds living in Boroondara face and what the opportunities for improving social inclusion and participation could be.

Between February and April 2024, further consultation was undertaken with 32 people from multicultural communities or key community organisations and faiths groups. The purpose was to share the findings from the consultation in 2023 and to identify any key issues, challenges or opportunities that had not been captured in the earlier consultation.

Stage 4 – Draft Plan development

Through the research and consultation with the community, service providers, community organisations and faith groups, valuable information about what Council is doing well to create a welcoming and inclusive community, and the challenges experienced by people from multicultural communities was gathered. Additional feedback on how Council could make Boroondara more welcoming and inclusive so all community members can participate in social, cultural, economic and civic life was also collected. The findings from the consultation and research were shared with Council staff, and informed the development of the themes, strategic objectives, programs and actions in the draft Plan.

Consultation

Who we heard from

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the number of responses to each type of consultation.

Table 1: Consultation method and number of responses

Consultation method	Participation
Community survey (29 March to 7 May 2023)	216 community member responses, noting 31 countries of birth were collected. This included: • 66 born in China • 48 born in Australia • 20 born in Vietnam • 11 born in Malaysia • 8 born in Korea • 7 born in India • 5 born in Italy • 5 born in UK • 4 born in Sri Lanka • 3 born in Greece • 39 born in 21 other countries with Iran and Japan being most typical. Of the 216 respondents, 141 identified as women (65.3%), 61 identified as men (28.2%) and 14 preferred not to respond (6.5%) to the question, 'What is your gender?'. People from all age groups responded to the survey, with the largest participation from those aged 70 to 74 years (12%), followed by 40 to

Consultation method	Participation
	44 years (11.6%) and 60 to 64 years (10.2%). Adolescents and younger people under 25 years were less likely to respond. Of the 216 responses, 63 were completed in languages other than English including: • 46 in Simplified Chinese • 10 in Korean • 4 in Italian • 3 in Vietnamese. Of the 216 responses, English and Mandarin were the preferred languages spoken at home with the following languages spoken at home noted: • 86 English • 56 Mandarin • 20 Cantonese • 16 Vietnamese • 5 Italian • 4 Greek • 27 other • 2 preferred not to say.
Organisational survey (April to July 2023)	33 responses from organisations, business and community groups providing services to multicultural communities and those for the wider community were collected. Respondents included schools, neighbourhood houses, businesses, health services and ethno-specific services.
Workshop with members of the Boroondara Interfaith Network and the Cultural Champions initiative to promote the survey and gather feedback (April 2023).	13 community members and representatives of organisations took part.
Secondary consultations with key stakeholders (Feb to April 2024).	32 people/representatives from community organisations, the Cultural Champions initiative and the Boroondara Interfaith Network.
Total number of participants	294

Some community members also provided feedback directly to Council when they attended gatherings or events to promote the survey. These responses were also recorded and analysed. In addition, Council analysed 73 responses that included references to multicultural access and inclusion from the community consultation in

late 2020 to early 2021 for the renewal of the Boroondara Community Plan. We also analysed information captured from conversations with international students about health and wellbeing undertaken in June and August 2023.

Findings from community survey

The community survey asked the community questions related to:

- how they prefer to communicate with Council
- if they feel welcome in Boroondara
- their ideas for recognising and celebrating our multiculturalism.

Outlined below is a brief overview of the findings from the community survey.

Communication

When asked if Council's methods of communication are easy to access, 62.5% of 216 respondents agreed. One in four (26.4%) provided a neutral response and 5.6% disagreed.

Reasons for disagreeing with the statement included that respondents found the Council website difficult to navigate, translation of information into more languages was needed, and there was a lack of information, particularly in respect to plans and programs.

Respondents were asked to provide information regarding their preferred method of receiving information about Council's services and activities, where more than one answer could be provided. A total of 503 responses were collected from all 216 respondents. The majority of respondents (56%) noted that they receive information about Council's services and activities via email. The Boroondara Bulletin was used by many (42.6%), followed by social media (32.4%) and Council's website (31%). Face to face with Council staff was used by 15.7% of respondents.

In response to the question 'Do you use translated material', only 18.1% answered. Of those responses, printed translated information (48.7%), followed by information translated on the Boroondara website (38.5%) and by phone apps (25.6%) were the most widely utilised. A smaller proportion (12.8%) said they use a phone interpreter.

Participation

When asked if people feel welcome to take part in local activities and events in Boroondara, a large majority agreed with the statement (78.2%). Less than 3% disagreed.

Reasons noted for agreeing with the statement included that Boroondara is welcoming, inclusive, feels like home, a place to play, have fun, take part in activities/events/services, and living in Boroondara makes respondents feel happy/comfortable. Of the 3% of respondents that disagreed with the statement, reasons noted were that more activities were needed, there is a lack of timely information, the dissemination of information needs to be improved, language is a barrier, and that Boroondara is unwelcoming to newcomers.

Recognition and celebration

The majority of respondents to the survey agreed that cultural diversity is recognised and celebrated in Boroondara (61.6%). A proportion of people disagreed (11.1%) and almost one in four provided a neutral response (23.2%).

There were 147 who answered why they provided their response. Reasons for agreeing with the statement included that they feel respected and that there is recognition/interest in cultural diversity. Respondents also indicated that they participated in activities, events and festivals.

Of the 11.1% that disagreed with the statement, the reasons given were that respondents were unaware of any cultural diversity activities/programs and that Council could promote cultural diversity through more activities/events in the community and through active recognition and celebration.

When asked to share any ideas about how the City of Boroondara could recognise and celebrate cultural diversity, respondents noted the following:

- more events, festivals and activities that highlight diverse cultures, faiths and dates of recognition (such as Diwali and Nowruz) that encourage interaction between different community groups
- better language support including the use of translation in Council communication
- more cultural events for the elderly
- provision of support to assist cultural community groups to hold events/ celebrations
- increased promotion of these events
- more information, training/education on diversity and inclusion to increase cultural awareness and prevent discrimination/racism within the Boroondara community and Council
- provision of more programs led by culturally diverse people.

Findings from consultation with community, services and key stakeholders

The findings from the consultation with key services and stakeholders indicated support for multiculturalism in Boroondara and for the work Council is already doing to make the municipality more welcoming and inclusive. The findings also identified challenges faced by multicultural communities and opportunities to build on the existing work. The table below provides a brief overview of the topics raised by services, community members and key stakeholders during the two phases of consultation to inform the development of this draft Plan. Also captured in this table is information shared with Council at sessions where they were promoting the survey.

Table 2: Brief overview of topics from the consultation

Topic	Brief overview
Celebration	Community members expressed a desire for more events, festivals, and initiatives that honour multiculturalism. Celebrations serve as platforms for various communities to proudly showcase their traditions, cultures and heritage. The community also indicated they would like to see a greater variety of dates of significance for different cultures and faiths recognised by Council. Activities that encourage community participation were suggested as being valuable for the sharing of knowledge and cultures.
Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue	It was acknowledged through the consultation with key stakeholders that Boroondara is a great place to live as there is good social cohesion. However, it was also acknowledged that due to the impact of recent international events some communities are feeling afraid. It was identified that Council has an important role to play in fostering and protecting the harmony in the municipality. The consultation with key stakeholders identified the importance of opportunities for intercultural dialogue that facilitate information exchange and connections among community members. The community also expressed the need for greater opportunities for sharing stories, experiences, and ideas across different cultural groups.

Topic	Brief overview
	These were identified as particularly important now for maintaining harmony in Boroondara.
Intergenerational	Intergenerational events were seen as playing a pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage and fostering stronger connections across generations. The community highlighted that events could provide an opportunity for mutual learning - older adults imparting their life experiences and knowledge, while younger people introduce fresh ideas and contemporary perspectives. It was also identified that second and third generation family members can play an important role in connecting parents and grandparents with activities and programs. They can also play an important role in translating information where language may be a barrier.
Racism and discrimination	Only a small number of respondents in the community and organisational survey identified racism or discrimination as an issue. In comparison, the consultations with key stakeholders in 2024 revealed more subtle examples of racism, which included not inviting community members to events, unconscious bias, and avoiding contact with people from multicultural backgrounds. In the consultation with key stakeholders, it was noted that it is important for Council to have a position and/or take action to reduce racism. Education and cultural awareness were highlighted as playing a crucial role in deterring racism and discrimination and improving social cohesion.
Access to information	The consultation with community organisations and service providers highlighted that language barriers can be a challenge for multicultural communities when participating in services and the community. The importance of promoting the availability of interpreter services was highlighted, as well as the need to provide translated information for multicultural groups and in particular, where there is low English proficiency. The need for the use of Plain English in communication was also highlighted and the need for multiple communications channels. Community members noted appreciation for the multicultural videos used to promote the survey for the development of the draft Plan, and the ability to complete

Topic	Brief overview
	the survey in their own language. They highlighted how the use of translated materials can make community members feel welcome.
Access to services and programs	Throughout the consultation process, it was noted that equal access to resources, services, and opportunities for all members of the community was important. Community members expressed the need for services and initiatives to be mindful of potential barriers that limit access. These barriers include language differences, resource constraints, and lack of awareness. Community members expressed appreciation for the programs provided by Council in languages other than English, such as parent groups and English conversation classes. The importance of opportunities such as these to meet new people and develop English language skills was highlighted as being essential for helping people from multicultural backgrounds to settle in Boroondara. Participants in Council's multicultural seniors groups also noted the importance of being able to come together to celebrate culture and connect with other people from their cultural group. Community members from seniors groups and international students noted that access to transport could be a barrier to accessing Council services, facilities and programs and cost was also a barrier for some.
Social isolation and loneliness	The consultation identified that social isolation can be an issue for some people from multicultural backgrounds. This can include people with limited English proficiency, social networks or family support. This highlighted the importance of opportunities for social connection. One of the community organisations noted they had a large number of volunteers from multicultural backgrounds volunteering. Volunteering provides an opportunity for developing social connections outside their cultural group.
Family violence and elder abuse	The consultation with key stakeholders noted that family violence and elder abuse can be an issue for community members from multicultural backgrounds and that there was a need to raise awareness of what family violence/elder abuse is and where to seek help.

Topic	Brief overview
Mental health	Community members and key stakeholders identified barriers for people from multicultural communities accessing mental health services due to associated cultural stigma. There can be intergenerational differences in expectations placed on young people from some cultural groups and that this can impact their mental health and wellbeing.
Intersectionality	Key stakeholders highlighted the importance of considering intersectionality when planning initiatives for multicultural groups, as people's experience can vary depending on other social characteristics such as age, gender and sexuality.
Capacity building	There is a strong desire for more programs developed and led by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the community expressed a need for increased leadership opportunities for individuals from multicultural backgrounds.