

## **Yarra Multicultural Advisory Group (YMAG) Review 2017**

### **Purpose:**

To review the YMAG in its second year of operating, and to make recommendations for 2017.

### **Background:**

The YMAG was established in 2016 as a direct result of the Multicultural Partnerships Plan Action Plan, which included investigating an appropriate model for an advisory group in Yarra to represent multicultural communities.

The YMAG met four times during 2017 and was open to all community members interested in participating. Membership is open and fluid, in order to be as inclusive as possible, and to have greater and more diverse reach.

### **YMAG Aims**

- To provide a structure for on-going communication and consultation between multicultural communities and Yarra City Council across a broad range of issues impacting on those communities.
- To provide feedback on the implementation of the Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2015-2018
- To provide feedback and advice to Council on its policies, plans and services that impact multicultural communities
- To consider and provide advice on key Government initiatives, programs and reviews
- To advocate on behalf of multicultural communities
- To share information and resources between community groups and their representatives
- To assist Council to promote the benefits of cultural diversity within the Yarra municipality and beyond
- To provide advice to Council with its communication, engagement and consultation with multicultural communities

### **YMAG Activities and Meetings 2017**

The YMAG met four times in 2017 based on recommendations made after the first year review.

#### *Topics covered at meetings included:*

-consultations for various Council documents, (Library Draft Strategy, Youth and Family Services 0-25 Strategy, Changes to January 26 Information sheet for CALD communities);

-Council updates on budget planning, Community Grants, news, library news and communications issues;

-Updates on the Stand Together Anti vilification Project; and

-Presentations from external service providers and stakeholders (Census data for Yarra based on 2016 Census, Neighbourhood Houses).

### **Consultation:**

Discussions were held during meetings on the **aims** and **scope** of the YMAG (ie the Terms of Reference) , as well as suggestions for future meetings. Ongoing informal discussions were also conducted outside of meeting times with group leaders and members.

Anecdotal analysis of participants' language and cultural backgrounds is also included.

### **Results**

The aspects respondents found most useful about the meetings included:

- presentations from Council staff about Council programs
- information about libraries
- information from the Census about Yarra and how its changing
- the opportunity to provide suggestions and advice to Council about improving living in Yarra
- networking
- information from other organisations
- linking with other multicultural groups

Suggestions and topics to improve future meetings:

- social inclusion activities
- learning about the history of Yarra
- sharing cultural traditions
- community safety issues
- holding meetings more frequently

Upon review of this feedback, there were no major changes to the terms of reference suggested, or to the structure or aims of the YMAG.

### **Demographics**

Analysis of the attendance records (and interpreters booked) has shown there was representation from the following communities: Chinese, Italian, Serbian, Croatian, Greek, Yugoslav (self-described), Vietnamese, Syrian, Eritrean, Italian, Latin American, as well as Australian born.

There was a lack of representation from younger participants, (18-25) which should be a focus for inclusion in the coming year.

## **Issues and Considerations**

### *Costs*

Holding meetings during business hours (as per last year's recommendations) has been more cost effective, as interpreter costs are nil (Council is subsidised for interpreter costs during business hours if using TIS).

Catering has been maintained at previous levels and it is recommended to continue doing so, as it is an external stakeholder meeting, and people are giving their time to be involved. It is reasonable to provide adequate and culturally appropriate refreshment to participants.

### *Participant access*

Discussions revealed that participants indicated a preference for daytime meetings, however consideration should be made to alternate days in 2018 so that groups who meet on a Wednesday have the opportunity to attend on other days.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the information collected throughout the year and through discussions, these are the following recommendations:

- YMAG meetings continue to meet quarterly.
- YMAG meetings continue to be held during the day (business hours), in order to keep costs down and ensure Council staff and other service providers are able to attend meetings.
- Alternate meeting days between Wednesday and Tuesday to allow for people who meet with their groups on these days to attend the other days.
- Continue the current structure of the YMAG (open invitation to participants, Councillor as Chair).
- Continue to expand attendance to include younger members and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Continue to provide catering to the group at meetings.
- Review Terms of reference with YMAG members at the February meeting.