GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS REPORT

Multicultural Legislation in Australia: A Cross-Jurisdictional Review

Date 17 October 2025

Background

Western Australia is one of the most culturally diverse states in Australia, with more than 32% of residents born overseas. Western Australians come from more than 221 countries, speak 249 languages, and practice over 130 faiths. This diversity enriches the State's social, cultural, and economic fabric, but also presents challenges in ensuring equitable access to services and opportunities for all.

In contrast to several other Australian states and territories, Western Australia currently does not have dedicated multicultural legislation. Instead, multicultural affairs are guided by policy instruments such as the WA Charter of Multiculturalism (2004) and the Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework (2020). These policies reflect the WA Government's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable society, but they lack legislative authority.

This Report provides an analysis of existing multicultural legislation across Australian jurisdictions, including their legislative structures and implementation mechanisms. It also outlines the observed impacts of legislative implementation. By examining how other states have implemented multicultural legislation, this review aims to support informed dialogue and policy innovation as part of the development of a Western Australian Multicultural Act.

Jurisdictional Review

This section provides an overview of how multiculturalism is embedded through legislation, advisory mechanisms, and policy across various Australian jurisdictions, with a table summarising key features (Appendix A). Australia currently does not have national legislation dedicated to multiculturalism. Canada is the only country to have a standalone federal law relating to multiculturalism, a brief overview of which is provided in this section.

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Legislation: *Multiculturalism Act 2023*

Purpose: The Act promotes multiculturalism in the ACT by establishing and advancing a charter for multiculturalism, creating a Multicultural Advisory Council, and providing a framework for ongoing review and development of government efforts in this area.

Key Components

- **Preamble:** Emphasises the importance of respecting and acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising the ACT's cultural diversity, and affirming multiculturalism as a positive force in community life. It acknowledges the challenges of discrimination and commits to fostering an inclusive, unified society where everyone is respected and valued.
- **Multicultural Charter**: Outlines principles such as respect for cultural diversity, inclusion, and equal participation in civic life. It serves as a guiding document for government and community.
- **Multicultural Advisory Council**: The Council consists of 11 community representatives who advise the Minister on effective ways to promote multiculturalism in the ACT, assess the impact of government policies, programs, and actions, and facilitate consultation and information exchange between government and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities. The Council also undertakes any additional responsibilities assigned under territory law.
- **Obligations on Government Authorities**: Government departments must develop and review policies that support cultural diversity, ensure equitable access to services, and consult with the community on how best to meet these obligations.

Responsible Entities: Government authorities.

Reporting Obligations:

- **Ministerial Council**: Must prepare an annual report under the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004 (ACT)*.
- **Government authorities:** Must report annually on how their policies and services reflect and support cultural and linguistic diversity, and how they give effect to the Multicultural Charter.
- **Minister**: Must present an Annual Statement to the Legislative Assembly detailing the implementation of the Act and Charter.

New South Wales (NSW)

Legislation: *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* which repealed the *Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1979* and *Ethnic Affairs Commission Regulation 1997*, abolished the Ethnic Affairs Commission and established the Community Relations Commission continued as Multicultural NSW.

Purpose: To enshrine multicultural principles as state policy and establish institutional mechanisms for their implementation.

Key Components

- **Preamble:** The Act promotes equal rights and responsibilities for all people in New South Wales within a cohesive, multicultural society. It encourages a shared commitment to New South Wales and Australia, values diversity as a strength, establishes English as the common language, and recognises the varied linguistic, religious, and ancestral backgrounds of its people.
- **Principles:** The Act establishes that all individuals, regardless of background, should share a unified commitment to Australia and uphold shared values within a democratic framework. It affirms freedom to maintain one's linguistic, religious, and ancestral heritage, and calls for respect and accommodation of cultural diversity within the legal and institutional context where English is the common language. The Act also promotes broad participation in public life and recognises the state's linguistic and cultural assets as valuable resources for development.
- **Multicultural NSW**: A statutory authority responsible for implementing multicultural policy, consulting with communities, advising the Minister, coordinating responses to cultural diversity, and partnering with public authorities to ensure consistent application of multicultural principles and improved access to government services.
- **Advisory board**: Consists of 15 community members and advises Multicultural NSW and the Minister and conducts broad consultation with communities.
- **Regional advisory councils**: Consists of members who reflect the diversity of the local community, these representatives advise Multicultural NSW on relevant matters affecting multicultural policy and practice.

Responsible Entities: State and local authorities.

Reporting obligations:

- **Multicultural NSW**: Must prepare an annual report on the state of community relations, including an assessment of how responsible authorities implement multicultural principles and recommendations.
- **Government authorities**: Required to implement and report on multicultural plans under the Multicultural Outcomes Reporting Framework.
- **Minister**: Must table the report in both Houses of Parliament within 14 sitting days of receipt of the MNSW annual report.

Northern Territory

Legislation: The Northern Territory does not have multicultural legislation. Multicultural affairs are governed through multicultural policy.

Policy: Multicultural Policy for the Northern Territory 2025–2030 is administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) within the Department of People, Sport and Culture. It recognises the Territory's rich cultural diversity, shaped by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, long-

established migrant communities, and newly arrived residents. It aims to foster a socially inclusive and economically vibrant Territory by supporting cultural expression, community participation, and equitable access to services. It has four key objectives:

- Building Our Diversity—Promoting cultural understanding and respect
- Strengthening Our Partnerships—Enhancing collaboration between government and multicultural communities
- Celebrating Our Connections—Supporting cultural events and storytelling
- Empowering Our Communities—Improving access to services, employment, and civic participation.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs: Oversees policy implementation and coordination across agencies.

Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs: provides high-level advice and may contribute to reporting on policy outcomes.

Responsible entities: Government authorities

Reporting Obligations:

- **Government authorities**: Expected to align programs with policy objectives and contribute to whole-of-government reporting.

Queensland

Legislation: *Multicultural Recognition Act 2016*

Purpose: The Act recognises the contributions of Queensland's diverse communities, promotes inclusion through the multicultural charter, and ensures government services are responsive to diversity by establishing a council, setting policy and action plans, raising awareness among public sector employees, and introducing reporting obligations for relevant entities.

Key Components

- **Multicultural Queensland Charter**: Sets out principles including respect, inclusion, freedom of cultural expression, and recognition of Aboriginal peoples and migrants.
- **Advisory Council**: Consists of 11 community members that advise the Minister on the needs and contributions of people from diverse backgrounds, raises awareness of the multicultural charter, supports the development of multicultural policies and responsive services, and consults with groups as directed by the Minister.
- **Policy:** Directed that establishment of a multicultural policy within 6 months of the Act being implemented. This policy promotes the principles of the multicultural charter, sets outcomes for government services to people from diverse backgrounds in Queensland, and ensures a consistent approach to collecting diversity data across government entities.
- **Multicultural Action Plan:** The Minister must prepare an action plan to implement the multicultural policy within 6 months of it coming into effect. The plan must align with the principles of the multicultural charter and specify actions for government entities to achieve multicultural policy outcomes and ensure services are accessible to those with limited English proficiency. A new plan is required every 3 years.

Responsible Entities: The Act binds all persons, including state authorities.

Reporting Obligations:

- **Government authorities**: Must publish on their websites both a statement of required actions from their multicultural action plans and a summary of progress made in implementing these actions each financial year.
- **Minister**: After each multicultural action plan concludes, a report must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly detailing the extent to which multicultural policy outcomes have been achieved and the actions taken by government entities.
- **Advisory Council**: A summary of each meeting must be published on the department's website and other appropriate channels, stating the key issues discussed and decisions made with approval from the Minister.

South Australia

Legislation: *South Australian Multicultural Act 2021*

Purpose: To advance multiculturalism and interculturalism[1] in South Australia, to establish the South Australian Multicultural Commission and to provide for the South Australian Multicultural Charter. It repeals the *South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1980*.

Key Components:

- **Parliamentary Declaration**: articulates Parliament's commitment to multiculturalism which acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as the state's first peoples, recognises the rich cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious diversity of its population, and affirms the right of all individuals to express and celebrate their heritage. It promotes a whole-of-government approach to policy and encourages full participation in all aspects of South Australian life, emphasizing mutual respect, understanding, and the value of diversity as an asset that enriches the community and supports a unified, harmonious, and inclusive society.
- **South Australian Multicultural Charter**: sets the guiding principles for multiculturalism, outlining the state's commitment to diversity, inclusion, mutual respect, and the active participation of all communities in public life. The Minister must, in consultation with the Multicultural Commission, prepare and maintain the South Australian Multicultural Charter.
- **South Australian Multicultural Commission**: Consists of up to 15 people and advises the Minister and state authorities on implementation of the Act, multicultural affairs, promotes awareness and understanding of diversity, supports unity and harmony among communities, addresses issues of discrimination, and monitors the effectiveness of government services and programs in advancing multicultural objectives.

Responsible Entities: State and local government authorities.

Reporting Obligations:

- **South Australian Multicultural Commission**: Must submit an annual report to the Minister detailing progress on implementing the Act, Charter and Commission's objectives.
- **Minister**: Must table the above report before Parliament, and may be incorporated into the annual report of the government authority responsible for administering this Act under a

[1] "Interculturalism" is defined in the Act as "policies and practices that recognise and promote in the community—a deep understanding of, and respect for, all cultures; and a dynamic, inclusive interaction between diverse groups within the community.

Minister.

Tasmania

Legislation: Tasmania does not have multicultural legislation. Multicultural affairs are governed through multicultural policy.

Policy: Multicultural Policy in Tasmania is administered through Community and Government Services, Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Embracing Diversity, Fostering Belonging: Tasmania's Multicultural Action Plan 2025–2029 articulates a vision for Tasmania as a harmonious, inclusive, and respectful multicultural island where all residents feel a sense of belonging and are empowered to contribute and achieve and has four key priorities:

- Addressing Racism and Fostering Social Cohesion—Promoting respect, safety, and inclusion.
- Encouraging Participation—Supporting civic, social, educational, and economic engagement.
- Inclusive Services—Ensuring government services are culturally responsive and accessible.
- Celebrating Diversity—Supporting cultural events and storytelling to strengthen community connections.

Multicultural Council Tasmania: Informed the development of the policy and provide advice to government on multicultural affairs.

Community and Government Services: Coordinate whole-of-government reporting and supports the Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs.

Responsible Entities: State Government authorities

Reporting Obligations

- Government agencies: Required to incorporate multicultural initiatives into strategic and operational plans and report on implementation in their annual reports.

Victoria

Legislation: The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* repeals and re-enacts with amendments the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2004*.

Purpose: The Act establishes the principles of multiculturalism in Victoria, creates the Victorian Multicultural Commission and regional advisory councils, and sets out reporting requirements for both the Commission and government departments in relation to multicultural affairs.

Key Components:

- **Preamble:** The Parliament of Victoria recognises and values the state's cultural, religious, racial, and linguistic diversity, and affirms that citizenship encompasses the rights and responsibilities of all individuals in a multicultural society—not just formal Australian citizenship. It promotes Victoria as a united community governed by shared laws and values, where people from diverse backgrounds have the freedom to preserve and express their cultural heritage, participate fully in public life, and enjoy equal rights and responsibilities under the law.
- **Principles:** The Act establishes that all individuals are entitled to mutual respect and equal participation in Victoria's social, cultural, economic, and political life, regardless of background. It emphasises shared laws and values, encourages cooperation to build a

progressive future, and recognises diversity as a valuable asset. Institutions are expected to promote and preserve this diversity, and Parliament acknowledges that a whole-of-government approach is essential to reflect Victoria's multicultural character in policy development and implementation.

- **Victorian Multicultural Commission:** The Commission is a statutory body of 12 members, including community representatives, that advises the government on multicultural affairs. It promotes full participation and equitable access for Victoria's diverse communities, encourages cultural expression and mutual respect, and supports collaboration among multicultural organisations. The Commission also advises the Minister on systemic issues, investigates matters referred by the Minister, consults widely to understand community needs, and fosters partnerships to strengthen service delivery and inclusion across the state.
- **Regional Advisory Councils**: The Act established 8 regional advisory councils to inform the VMC of regional issues and support community engagement.

Responsible Entities: State Government authorities.

Reporting Obligations:

- **Victorian Multicultural Commission**: Must report annually on its activities and multicultural affairs.
- **Government authorities**: Must report annually to the Minister on:
  - use of interpreting and translating services
  - communications in languages other than English, including those in multicultural media
  - initiatives that promote multiculturalism
  - improvements made to address the needs of diverse communities
  - representation of people from diverse backgrounds on boards and committees
  - engagement with youth, seniors, and women from CaLD backgrounds
  - initiatives targeting the needs of diverse communities in regional and rural Victoria
  - measures taken to promote human rights in line with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.
- **Minister**: Minister to consolidate information received from government authorities and table report in Parliament.

Canada

Legislation: *Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988)*

Purpose: To preserve and enhance multiculturalism in Canada as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian identity, and to promote the full and equitable participation of all individuals and communities in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the country.

Key Components:

- **Policy:** Multicultural Policy in Canada recognises and promotes the country's cultural and racial diversity, affirming the right of all individuals to preserve and share their heritage. It positions multiculturalism as a core aspect of Canadian identity and a vital resource for shaping the nation's future. The policy supports full and equitable participation in society, encourages inclusive institutions, values linguistic diversity alongside official languages, and fosters mutual understanding, creativity, and community service across all cultural backgrounds.

- **Federal institutions:** The Act supports equal employment and advancement opportunities for Canadians of all origins and promotes inclusive practices that enable full participation in shaping Canadian society. It encourages respect for diversity, the use of cultural and language skills and the collection of data to inform responsive policies and programs. Institutions are expected to operate in ways that reflect and support Canada's multicultural society.
- **Specific mandate:** The Minister shall take such measures as the Minister considers appropriate to implement the multiculturalism policy of Canada and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may establish:
    - **Provincial agreements**: The Minister may enter into an agreement or arrangement with any province respecting the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada.
    - **International agreements:** The Minister may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into an agreement or arrangement with the government of any foreign state to foster the multicultural character of Canada.
- **Canadian Multiculturalism Advisory Committee**: The Minister may establish an advisory committee to advise and assist on the implementation of the Act and any other matter relating to multiculturalism.
- **Responsible entities:** The Minister, in consultation with other ministers, shall encourage and promote a coordinated approach to the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada.

Reporting Obligations:

- **Federal Institutions**: Must report annually on their activities under the Act, including initiatives that support multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Minister**: Must table in Parliament, no later than the fifth sitting after 31 January following the end of each financial year, a report on the operation of the Act for that financial year.
- **Chairman of the advisory committee**: Must, within 4 months after the end of each financial year, submit to the Minister a report on the activities of the committee for that year and on any other matter relating to the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada that the chairman considers appropriate.
- **Minister**: Must table in Parliament, no later than the fifth sitting after 31 January following the end of each financial year, a report on the operation of the Act for that financial year.

Western Australia (WA)

Western Australia currently does not have multiculturalism related legislation. Instead, multicultural affairs are guided by the WA Charter of Multiculturalism (Charter), endorsed by the State Cabinet and published in 2004 and implemented through the Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework (WAMPF) 2020 coordinated by the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI). These instruments reflect the WA Government's commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable and culturally diverse society.

Together, the Charter and WAMPF provide the strategic and operational foundations of multicultural policy in WA. They are supported by complementary initiatives such as the Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council (MMAC), the Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020 and the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality.

While other jurisdictions established a legislation to initiate development of multicultural charters, policies and decision-making bodies, WA has these mechanisms already in place. However, they are currently not legislated and can be impacted by change in Government priorities.

WA Charter of Multiculturalism

The WA Charter of Multiculturalism is a formal statement of commitment by the Government of Western Australia and plays a strategic role in shaping multicultural policy across the State. It is grounded in democratic pluralism, promoting a society where difference is respected and equal participation is enabled. It is structured around four key principles:

- Civic values–the equality of respect, mutual respect, individual freedom and dignity for all members of society subject to the acceptance of the rule of law, social, political and legal institutions and constitutional structures.

Fairness–the pursuit of public policies free of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of characteristics such as origins, perceived 'race', culture, religion, ethnicity and nationality.

- Equality–equality of opportunity for all members of society to achieve their full potential in a free and democratic society where every individual is equal before, and under, the law.
- Participation–the full and equitable participation in society of individuals and communities, irrespective of origins, culture, religion, ethnicity and nationality

The Charter's significance lies in its articulation of the WA Government's commitment to multiculturalism. Its principles are directly referenced in the WAMPF which was developed to operationalise the Charter's intent through agency-level policy development, planning, reporting and inclusive service delivery.

The Charter also presents a valuable opportunity to formally embed its principles within an Act, ensuring they are not only aspirational but mandated, reinforcing their importance and enabling consistent and widespread application.

Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council

The Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council (MMAC) was established by the WA Cabinet in December 2020, as a consultative body to the Minister for Multicultural Interests (the Minister) on issues facing CaLD communities. The MMAC provides input on government policy, program and planning processes that affect Western Australians from CaLD backgrounds. It also assists the Minister in reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the WAMPF.

The role of the MMAC is to:

- be a consultative body to the WA Government and the Minister on issues facing CaLD communities
- provide input on government policy, program and planning processes that affect Western Australians from CaLD backgrounds
- provide advice on emerging issues and trends in multiculturalism
- assist the Minister in reviewing and monitoring of the implementation of the Western Australia Multicultural Policy Framework
- provide feedback and support to the Supporting Communities Forum on matters under consideration by the Forum, particularly those that impact the interests and needs of the CaLD communities
- contribute to consultations with other public sector agencies
- undertake any other activities as requested by the Minister.

The Council's role is separate to that of the Office of Multicultural Interests.

Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework (WAMPF)

The Western Australian Multicultural Policy (WAMPF) was launched on 17 March 2020 to support the WA Government's vision for an inclusive and harmonious society. The WAMPF is based on the principles of the WA Charter of Multiculturalism and identifies strategies to ensure public sector operations, policies, programs and services are responsive to the needs of CaLD communities.

The framework identifies three policy priority areas:

1. Harmonious and inclusive communities.
2. Culturally responsive policies, programs and services.
3. Economic, social, cultural, civic and political participation.

The WAMPF is in its fifth year of implementation and as of September 2025, 64 WA public sector agencies are implementing multicultural plans that include specific actions and deliverables relating to the WAMPF's three policy priority areas.

Agencies report on the status of their multicultural plans in their annual reports and provide a detailed annual progress report to the Office of Multicultural Interests.

As of 30 June 2024, public sector agencies have committed to implementing 4,830 actions across the three policy priority areas. Of these actions, 2,298 (47.6%) have been completed with implementation of the remaining actions ongoing.

The WAMPF establishes a system of public sector agency accountability, requiring public sector bodies to develop multicultural plans, report on progress and integrate cultural and linguistic diversity considerations into their planning and performance.

Related policies and frameworks in WA

WA Language Services Policy 2020

WA has had a language services policy since the 1990s. The current WA Language Services Policy 2020 aims to ensure equitable access to Western Australian public sector services, through the provision of language services. It affirms the WA Government's commitment to ensuring that all Western Australians are provided with access to services that are responsive and of high quality. This includes those who are not able to communicate effectively in written and/or spoken Standard Australian English, including some Aboriginal people, some people from CaLD backgrounds, and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

The policy includes expectations for WA Government agencies in a range of areas including:

- be client focused in the delivery of services, including responding to clients' language needs
- inform clients who are not able to communicate in spoken and/or written Standard English of:
  - their right to communicate in their preferred language and dialect and to request an interpreter
  - the agency's complaints/feedback processes.
- provide free of charge and targeted language services that adequately address the client's rights, and risks to their health and safety
- maximise the cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills of appropriately trained agency staff

to help improve the provision of front-line services

- provide cultural competency training to staff, especially front-line service staff, including when and how to work with interpreters and translators
- provide better planning, management and delivery of language services by incorporating interpreting, translating and multilingual information needs into budgeting, human resource and client service programs
- incorporate appropriate arrangements for funded non-government service organisations to engage interpreters and translators for service delivery and making these organisations aware of how to access language services through the Western Australian Government Common Use Arrangement (CUA) for Interpreting and Translating Services
- ensure that the interpreters and translators engaged are tertiary qualified and/or National Authority of Accreditation for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) credentialed
- use multilingual communication and marketing strategies.

Complementing the policy and managed by the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Common Use Agreement (CUA) for interpreting and Translating Services supports the implementation of the WA Language Services Policy 2020 by providing pre-approved access to qualified contractors who offer interpreting and translating services to WA public sector agencies.

Policy Framework for Substantive Equality

The Policy Framework for Substantive Equality outlines the WA Government's commitment to addressing systemic discrimination and promoting equitable outcomes across the public sector. It plays a strategic role in shaping inclusive service planning and delivery. Launched in 2005 to address systemic racism, it was broadened in 2013 to encompass all forms of systemic discrimination.

The Framework serves as a blueprint for embedding substantive equality into agency planning, service design and delivery. The objectives of the Policy Framework are to achieve substantive equality by:

- eliminating systemic discrimination in the provision of public sector services
- understanding the different needs of client groups and adjusting services accordingly.

It is structured around four key drivers of change: needs assessment, monitoring, organisational performance appraisal and learning and development. These drivers of change are directly relevant to the implementation of multicultural policy priorities such as culturally responsive policies and services, capacity building and monitoring and reporting.

Related legislation

Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)

This Act is Western Australia's key legislation for promoting equality and preventing discrimination. It prohibits discrimination and harassment based on attributes such as race, sex, age, impairment, religion, political conviction, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, and gender history. The Act applies to employment, education, accommodation, goods and services, and club activities. It also establishes the Equal Opportunity Commission, which handles complaints through investigation, conciliation, and referral to the State

Administrative Tribunal if unresolved.

Criminal Code Act (WA)

This Act consolidates and codifies criminal offences and procedures, providing a structured legal framework for prosecuting crimes across the state. Over time, the Code has undergone significant amendments to reflect evolving societal values, particularly in relation to racial vilification and hate speech.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)

This Act is Australia's foundational federal law prohibiting racial discrimination. It was enacted to give domestic effect to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which Australia ratified in 1975. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin and immigrant status. The Act binds both the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)

This Act aims to promote and protect human rights in Australia. It covers various areas, including race, sex, disability, and age discrimination and establishing the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Act outlines the Commission's functions which include handling complaints of racial discrimination and applies to all States and Territories.

Multicultural legislation impact summary

Across Australian jurisdictions, Multicultural Acts serve as important legislative frameworks that promote inclusion, equity and social harmony. Their enactment reflects a shared government commitment to valuing cultural diversity, fostering intercultural understanding and enabling full participation of CaLD communities in civic, cultural, political and economic life.

Below is an overview of the impacts identified from establishment of Multicultural Acts across Australian jurisdictions gathered through consultation with jurisdictional representatives and a review of public sector reports, ministerial statements, media releases and relevant research.

Demonstrated commitment to multiculturalism

Demonstrated governments' commitment to ensuring that the principles of multiculturalism are not just aspirational but embedded in law. They have emphasised the importance of accountability, adequate investment in multicultural initiatives and the need to actively consult with CaLD communities.

Strengthened alignment with other Australian jurisdictions and related legislation

Reinforced shared objectives within existing legislation, strengthening the implementation of all related legislation and policy frameworks. They complemented laws relating to equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, and human rights, ensuring a cohesive and coordinated approach to advancing multiculturalism within and across jurisdictions.

Increased profile, recognition and investment in the multicultural sector

Elevated the visibility, legitimacy and influence of the multicultural sector. They positioned governments as leaders in multicultural governance, setting benchmarks for inclusive policy and service delivery both nationally and internationally. They strengthened the case for sustained investment in multicultural initiatives, enabled long-term planning, resource allocation and program delivery. They affirmed a commitment to human rights and diversity and also provided a foundation for strategic funding, support and longevity for the multicultural sector.

Enhanced government responsiveness to CaLD community

Highlighted the importance of government responsiveness to the needs of CaLD communities. Formalising advisory structures and mandating mechanisms for consultation, led to strengthened trust of government and ensured CaLD perspectives were meaningfully represented in decision-making. They also supported targeted resource allocation and reinforced inclusive policy development and service delivery.

Improved governance and accountability

Clearly defined the responsibilities of ministers, governance bodies, advisory groups, and public sector agencies, ensuring accountability and transparency. This included mandatory reporting by public sector agencies on multicultural policy implementation, publishing progress updates and contributing to whole-of-government implementation reports tabled in Parliament. They formalised and strengthened governance through establishing advisory and statutory bodies that implemented ministerial priorities, advised public sector agencies, and engaged communities to ensure responsive, coordinated program delivery.

Increased local government and regional engagement

While not always mandated, multicultural legislation has played a key role in strengthening engagement with local governments and regional communities by embedding inclusive policies

and principles at the local level. This has enhanced visibility and understanding of cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, while increasing accountability and promoting equity across metropolitan and regional areas.

Strengthened social cohesion and community resilience

Contributed to addressing racism and supporting social cohesion by embedding principles of belonging, inclusion, equity, and cultural, religious and linguistic diversity into government policy and practice. This helped build mutual respect and understanding across communities, promoted civic participation, and supported proactive responses to social tensions. By affirming the value of diversity, multicultural legislation has contributed to more resilient and harmonious communities.

Appendix A: Summary of components within Multicultural Acts across Australian jurisdictions

	Act	Charter	Advisory body	Policy	Reporting entities	Responsible entities
Australian Capital Territory	*Multiculturalism Act 2023 (ACT)*	Yes	Advisory council	No	Minister Advisory Council Government authorities	Government authorities
New South Wales	*Multicultural NSW Act 2000*	No, list of principles	Commission Advisory board Regional advisory councils	The Act states the principles are the policy	Commission Minister Government authorities (including local authorities)	Government authorities (including local authorities)
Northern Territory	No Act	No	No	Yes, but not legislated	Government authorities	Government authorities
Queensland	*QLD Multicultural Recognition Act 2016*	Yes	Advisory council	Policy Action plan	Minister Government authorities Advisory Council	Government authorities
South Australia	*South Australian Multicultural Act 2021*	Yes	Advisory council Commission	The Act states that the Charter is the policy	Minister Commission	Government authorities (including local authorities)
Tasmania	No Act	No	No	Yes, but not legislated	Government authorities	Government authorities
Victoria	*Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*	No, list of principles	Commission Regional advisory councils	Yes, but not legislated	Minister Commission	Government authorities
Western Australia	No Act	Yes	Advisory council	Yes, but not legislated	Government authorities	Government authorities
Canada	Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988)	No	Advisory committee	Yes	Minister Federal Departments Advisory body	Federal authorities

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