

**TOOWOOMBA
REGION**

*Weaving a
Collective Future*

Intercultural Strategy

2025 - 2030



First Cultures Acknowledgement

Toowoomba Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Toowoomba Region whose song lines traverse these lands and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the knowledge, rich traditions and bold ambitions of Australia's First Peoples.



Executive Summary

The Weaving a Collective Future: Toowoomba Region Intercultural Strategy 2025–2030 is a bold and forward-thinking framework designed to strengthen the region’s cultural diversity, social cohesion, and community engagement.

Developed through extensive consultation with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) residents, service providers, and the broader community, the Strategy provides a roadmap for fostering inclusion, participation, and intercultural connections in the Toowoomba Region.

The Strategy acknowledges the rich cultural heritage of the region’s First Peoples and the longstanding contributions of migrants and refugees. It aligns with local, state, national, and global policies to promote equity, participation, and belonging for all residents. A key emphasis is placed on interculturalism, which encourages meaningful interactions between people of different backgrounds, strengthening mutual respect and understanding.

Guided by the principles of community development, interculturalism, self-determination, and sustainability, the Strategy is structured around four interconnected goals, and focuses Council’s role in awareness-raising, activation, action, and advocacy.

With a commitment to ongoing monitoring and evaluation, the Strategy will evolve in response to community needs and priorities. Through this initiative, the Toowoomba Regional Council aims to be a leader in intercultural inclusion, where every resident has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from a shared and prosperous future.



Acknowledgements

Toowoomba Regional Council would like to thank all community members who contributed to the development of the Intercultural Strategy, whether via one-on-one conversations, engagement through the Cultural Diversity Network, or via the online survey during community consultations. We invite everyone to bring this collective ambition to life.

University of Southern Queensland

The research informing the Intercultural Strategy was conducted in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ). The strategy development and public engagement efforts were also facilitated with the support of UniSQ colleagues as part of this collaboration. We sincerely thank the university for its support and ongoing cooperation.

The Many Threads Framework

The Intercultural Strategy focuses on collective efforts to strengthen community cohesion, vibrancy and bringing about positive change. Inspired by the Many Threads framework, developed by Aunty Vickey Charles and the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), the weaving analogy reflects interconnectedness, respect, valuing, bridging and innovating together, and through this work we acknowledge and honour First Nations wisdom.



Contents

Mayor's Welcome	1
Message from Cr James O'Shea	2
We are Many Threads	3
How Do We Advance Multiculturalism as an Ideal for All Residents?	3
Snapshot of our Cultural Diversity	4
Our Strategic Context	5
Our Research and Consultation	7
What We Learned from Culturally Diverse Residents	8
What We Learned from the People Who Support Our Culturally Diverse Residents	11
What Does This Mean for Developing a Vibrant Multicultural Community?	12
Our Role in Continuing to Develop a Multicultural Community	13
Practice Framework	13
Practice Examples	14
Strategy Principles	15
Goals of the Intercultural Strategy 2025 - 2030	16
Our Monitoring and Evaluation	21
Glossary	22
References	23







Mayor's Welcome

On behalf of Toowoomba Regional Council and our Region's residents, I am proud to release our inaugural Intercultural Strategy 2025-2030.

The strategy's subtitle, Weaving a Collective Future, neatly frames our commitment to create a vibrant and inclusive community where diverse cultures are celebrated, respected and feature as partners in our Region's everyday life.

Our intent is to foster unity and understanding among residents from all backgrounds to ensure all residents play a role in our rich community life and share in our Region's prosperity. This is a goal that I'm positive our community is determined to achieve and celebrate.

Welcoming and relying on the talents of new arrivals to our area has occurred throughout our history.

The timeless stories of our Indigenous people resonate across our Region. The earliest European arrivals were mostly from Britain, followed by people arriving from Germany and China, many of whom worked on pastoral properties, established market gardens or started businesses in a developing Toowoomba.

Today we are home to residents who hail from many parts of Africa, especially North and South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as the latest arrivals from Afghanistan and Middle Eastern countries, such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and our Ezidi community.

Moves to support and help the Region's growing migrant and refugee communities integrate and flourish in the wider population led to Toowoomba being named as Queensland's third Refugee Welcome Zone in June 2013.

TRC also is a signatory on the Welcome Scroll, which was a joint project of Refugee Welcome Zone (RWZ) Councils, the Refugee Council of Australia, and Rural Australians for Refugees.

The Census figures paint a picture about our Region's changing demographics and our Intercultural Strategy 2025-2030 sets a clear direction for how all residents can engage, respect and learn from each other.

Everyone has a place to contribute to our Region's future and the strategy offers actions for community groups, service providers and businesses to help people from different cultural backgrounds participate in community life.

Respect, appreciation, understanding and a curiosity to learn about each other's cherished cultural backgrounds can build a community where we celebrate our differences and contribute to our modern identity.

Council appreciates the work of everyone involved in developing this progressive strategy that offers our Region the opportunity to turn our noted compassion into actions that lead to a positive future for all our residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff McDonald'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'G' and 'M'.

Cr Geoff McDonald

Mayor, Toowoomba Regional Council



Message from Cr James O'Shea

As Chair of Toowoomba Regional Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC), I am delighted to see our inaugural Toowoomba Regional Council Intercultural Strategy 2025 - 2030 released to the public.

The Toowoomba Region takes great pride in our residents' diversity.

We are committed to ensuring that every resident, regardless of their background, feels a true sense of belonging.

Our aspiration is clear: The Toowoomba Region will not only be a welcoming zone in name but in action — embedding inclusivity in policies, fostering multicultural employment and leadership opportunities, and advocating for resources that enable all individuals to contribute meaningfully.

The Toowoomba Regional Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC) serves as a structured body which represents our Region's diverse multicultural communities.

The MAC promotes inclusivity and strengthens connections between Council, culturally diverse people, and the service sector.

It also ensures that the voices of diverse residents are heard in decision-making processes.

As a Refugee Welcome Zone, Toowoomba has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to supporting multicultural communities, and the MAC stands as a testament to that vision, advocating for representation, policy integration, and meaningful engagement with multicultural groups.

The MAC will play a central role in the implementation of the Intercultural Strategy, through key areas: action, advocacy, and awareness.

Given my proud Filipino family heritage, I understand the profound impact of visible leadership in fostering a sense of belonging among diverse communities.

Chairing this committee confirms to me that having culturally diverse individuals in leadership roles creates a deeper sense of inclusion for all.

Through the MAC and the Intercultural Strategy, the Toowoomba Region envisions a future where cultural diversity is embraced, and every individual is empowered to call this Region home.

Cr James O'Shea

Chair, Toowoomba Regional Council Multicultural Advisory Committee
Environment and Community Portfolio

We are Many Threads

Weaving is the act of interlacing threads of many colours to form a singular and cohesive work of art that represents a story, a landscape, an idea. Each thread is tightly connected to add strength and depth to the overall picture. It is this aspiration that we hold for our region, a future where every resident in our community actively contributes the uniqueness of their culture(s), and works together to build the character, identity and resilience of our region.

Multiculturalism in Australia refers to the policy and practice of embracing and supporting cultural diversity across the country. It acknowledges and celebrates the contributions of various ethnic groups to our society. As an approach to diversity management, it promotes equal opportunity for individuals of all backgrounds to contribute to and participate in all aspects of life.

Today more than ever, we need to prepare for a future where we tighten our threads. In a time of funding limitations, it is important that we strive to develop self-reliant and sustainable communities. Enhancing the connections between community members will assist with this goal, and creating a vibrant multicultural community will strengthen these connections. Multiculturalism has developed through significant historical, social, and political shifts in the nation's history, moving from policies of assimilation to inclusion and then to social cohesion. Ongoing discussions continue to shape multiculturalism, often framing cultural diversity as a threat rather than a valuable resource.¹

HOW DO WE ADVANCE MULTICULTURALISM AS AN IDEAL FOR ALL RESIDENTS?

First, we must reconsider our understanding of where culture exists and recognise that culture resides within each of us. In so doing, we ensure that all cultures are recognised, equally valued and together we commit a part in shaping the future of our region. Through collective responsibility, we can respond to our regional challenges and seize opportunities to prosper together.

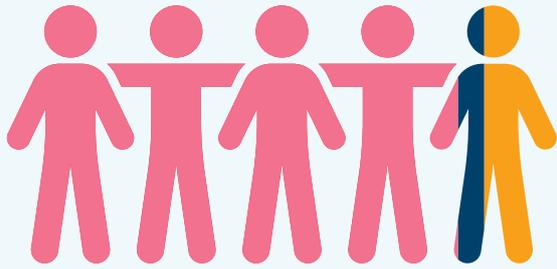
Second, we must actively forge connections and deepen our understanding of one another. This process is known as Interculturalism, an instrumental tool to develop a vibrant multicultural community. Interculturalism requires us to activate curiosity about others, extend respect for cultural differences, and learn from our different ways of knowing, being and doing². Connected communities matter and by adopting an intercultural approach, we achieve a deeper connection with and understanding of a diverse range of people, by engaging in rich dialogue and cultural exchange. This will contribute to our community's growth and will enrich our experience.

¹ See Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs. (2024a).

² See Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) for a discussion on the framework.



Snapshot of our Cultural Diversity³



POPULATION OF REGION 181,821

Population of indigenous people:
8,674, which is 5% of the population

14% of population born overseas
(22.7% QLD benchmark | 27.7% National benchmark)

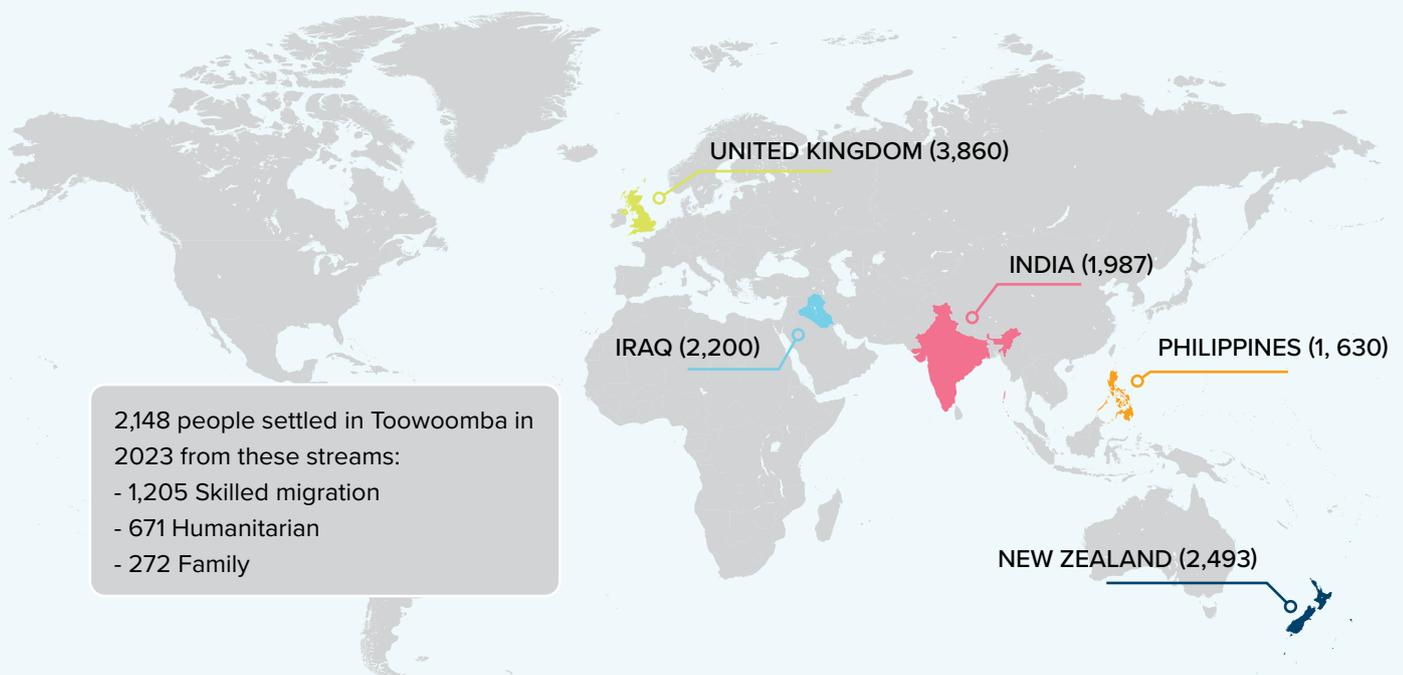


LANGUAGES

15,583 residents speak a language other than English at home, which is 9% of the population

Top five languages spoken at home: Kurdish, Tagalog/Filipino, Mandarin, Arabic, Nepali

24,057 BORN OVERSEAS TOP 5 COUNTRIES OF BIRTH



2,148 people settled in Toowoomba in 2023 from these streams:
 - 1,205 Skilled migration
 - 671 Humanitarian
 - 272 Family

³ Unless otherwise noted, all data is sourced from the Toowoomba Region's 2021 Census Community Profiles provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

⁴ See Australian Government (2024b) for migration data trends.

Our Strategic Context

The Intercultural Strategy 2025- 2030 is a forward-thinking framework that integrates principles from multiple legislative and strategic documents at the local, state, national and international levels. The Strategy is committed to upholding human rights and addressing group-specific cultural needs, ensuring equal participation, and promoting inclusion. Through this strategy, we formulate a vision of a multicultural community that is unique to our region, while also remaining connected to global conversations. This vision is central to the Strategy goals, and guides its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.

LEGISLATION/STRATEGIC DOCUMENT	DOCUMENT INTENT
Toowoomba Regional Council	
Corporate Plan 2024 - 2029	outlines a strategic vision that is deeply rooted in the region’s rich traditions while aiming for bold ambitions. It prioritises balanced growth, community well-being, environmental sustainability, and economic development through a focus on people, place, prosperity, and performance. The plan celebrates the uniqueness and diversity of the communities it aims to serve, and commits to building connection and belonging for all.
Connecting through Creativity - Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 - 2028	is a blueprint that articulates a vision for engagement and participation in the arts, culture and heritage of the region. It articulates key principles and outlines specific actions to promote respect and recognition of First Nations culture and heritage, and celebration of multicultural stories, heritage, and unique cultures that shape local identities.
Connect, Create, Activate - Toowoomba Region Youth Strategy 2025 - 2030	is designed to actively engage young people aged 12-24 across the Toowoomba Region. Its primary intent is to support young people in shaping the future of their communities through inclusion, participation, and access to diverse experiences. The strategy promotes the inclusion and understanding of young people from diverse and marginalised backgrounds.
State	
Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 (Queensland)	sets a vision for a unified, harmonious and inclusive Queensland Community. It establishes key mechanisms including the Multicultural Queensland Charter, Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council and Queensland Multicultural Policy to achieve the Act’s broader goals: to recognise the contribution of culturally diverse communities, strengthen inclusiveness, and ensure that government services meet the diverse needs of the people.
Queensland Multicultural Action Plan 2024-25 to 2026-27	outlines the actions the Queensland Government will take to achieve its multicultural policy priorities. In alignment with the Multicultural Recognition Act, it ensures that government services are fully accessible to people who have difficulty communicating in English. The plan focuses on delivering culturally responsive services, driving diversity and inclusion across the public sector, strengthening the economy, and promoting social cohesion.

National

Towards Fairness: A Multicultural Australia for All. Multicultural Framework Review

is a critical examination of Australia’s multicultural policies. Conducted for the first time in over fifty years, and through extensive community consultations, the review recommends changes to laws, policies, and institutional settings.

It suggests advancing multiculturalism in Australia through creating a culture of welcome, strengthened identity and belonging, enhancing connections within society, and building inclusive public services.

National Settlement Framework

is designed to guide collaborations between all levels of government to support the effective settlement of new arrivals. The framework identifies nine priority areas including language services, employment, education and training, housing, health and wellbeing, transport, civic participation, family and social support, and justice. It adopts a planning, delivery, and evaluation approach to the provision of culturally appropriate and inclusive services to assist migrants and refugees with building a new life in Australia.

National Anti-Racism Framework

serves as a detailed roadmap for government entities, businesses, and community organisations to proactively address and eliminate all forms of racism, through collective action. It presents recommendations for reforms that ensure all Australians can participate fully in societal life without discrimination.

Welcoming Cities Standards

is a framework developed to assist local Councils to benchmark, evaluate, and improve their policies and practices concerning cultural diversity and inclusion. It encourages cities to adopt comprehensive strategies that enhance inclusivity and foster a sense of belonging among all residents. The role of local governments is framed as a facilitation role through support of, or collaboration with, community stakeholders.

International

UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

serves as an international legal framework that encourages nations to reaffirm their commitment to cultural diversity, and promote policies that nurture cultural pluralism as an asset rather than a division. Acknowledging the role of culture in development, the Convention aims to protect and enhance the diversity of cultural expressions, foster mutual respect for different cultures, facilitate sustainable development, and support equitable access to cultural productions.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

provides a road map to mobilise global and local efforts for social, economic and ecological transformations. The Intercultural Strategy 2025 - 2030 is informed by the following SDGs to enhance the well-being, inclusion, and empowerment of culturally diverse residents.

Our Research and Consultation

Understanding the local challenges and contemporary approaches to building a multicultural community

This strategy is the culmination of sustained engagement with CALD residents, the regional service sector that supports CALD residents, and the broader community. Following a recommendation from the Inaugural Multicultural Advisory Committee in 2023, Council commissioned researchers from the University of Southern Queensland to conduct a study to investigate the needs of CALD residents living in the region. This study investigated the lived experience of newly arrived and existing CALD residents, and the services that exist to support them. Information was collected from the community by survey (229 responses) and conducting individual interviews (24 interviews).

The findings from this study identify the challenges that CALD residents experienced in their settlement within the Toowoomba region, and the strengths and gaps in support services. An overview of these findings are included in the following sections, however the full needs analysis report provides an extended description of the study methods and findings.

While the findings of this study provided an insight into the specific needs of CALD residents living within the Toowoomba region, it was also important to review the local, state, federal and international policies related to multiculturalism. This step in the research process supported the findings of our commissioned study, and identified contemporary approaches to develop multicultural communities that include and value the cultures of all people. The findings from the policy context review are included in Our Strategic Context section above, however one key finding was the importance of focusing on interculturalism, which goes beyond valuing different cultures and instead promotes the authentic exchange between them.



What We Learned from Culturally Diverse Residents

Our research indicated that CALD residents reported positive experiences of support as they settled in the Toowoomba region, particularly those residents who arrived as refugees. Further support for other CALD residents who did not arrive as refugees is required, as they can experience settlement issues and are not eligible for support services. Our research also highlighted that even after living within the region for several years, existing CALD residents may require specialised support to assist them with ongoing transition issues.

Although many residents experience the needs and challenges identified in the figure overleaf, CALD individuals may experience a higher level of challenge due to their diversity (e.g., barriers created by language, navigating new and complex support systems). To strengthen the support, it is important to ensure that barriers to access support services are addressed. Promoting a community that encourages belonging and participation is an important step for addressing these challenges. Through stronger community connections, CALD residents can become aware of the services that are available to support them, and those who provide services become aware of people who need their help.

A key finding from our research was that CALD residents expressed a strong desire for self-determination, and that opportunities to involve them in processes where they can feel supported and safe to self-advocate for themselves is important. Our research also highlighted the importance of community spaces for CALD residents as these are often used for gatherings. Further work can be done however in promoting awareness of which spaces are available.



Image credit: Nico & Co, International Street Fiesta 2024

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE RESIDENTS

Cultural sharing and connection needs
Cultural understanding & awareness by established members of the community



Need for engaging culturally diverse youth
Cultural and gender-specific challenges



Access to education (vocational options and pathways)
Underemployment/Unemployment



Language barriers
Timely access to interpreting and translation services



Housing access and affordability
Transportation challenges
Access to health services



WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT OUR CULTURALLY DIVERSE RESIDENTS



Representation, rich partnerships and self-determination



Strengthen collaboration and partnerships between service providers



Promote access and use of community spaces to encourage social interaction



Develop long-term strategy for impact, efficiency and sustainability



Advocacy: Moving from “advocating for” to supporting “self-advocacy”

Source: Blila et al., 2023.

What We Learned from the People Who Support Our Culturally Diverse Residents

Our research intended to find out what support services were provided for CALD residents, and also who these were provided by. We did find that there were a range of services available to support CALD residents, and these were delivered by local organisations (e.g., non-for-profits), government agencies (state and federal), and local community groups (e.g., church, sports organisations). One of our findings however was that there is a concentration of support for newly arrived residents, and that coordination between service providers to reduce duplication of services is needed.

Some of the key concerns raised by service providers included:

- The complexity of challenges for some groups of CALD residents (e.g., older migrants who are disconnected from the community due to language issues, CALD residents who experienced traumatic events);
- Limited funding and competition between providers for the same funding resources;
- Funding for settlement is concentrated on the first 12-16 months, however services to support some CALD residents should be extended based on needs; and
- Additional funding to be allocated to supporting new CALD residents who come on skilled or family visas.

Typically funding to support CALD residents is distributed by the state and federal governments. Advocating to these levels of government for funding to support CALD residents within our community is a responsibility of Council, and understanding the specific needs of CALD residents assists with advocacy efforts. Our research also suggested that Council play a role in creating opportunities to enhance collaboration and partnership between service organisations.

Our findings highlighted the important contribution that community volunteers make in supporting CALD residents. Volunteerism is a valuable part of the service sector, however similar to other regions within Australia, volunteering is on a decline. Therefore, how we maintain and grow the number of volunteers in our community is important for supporting CALD residents.



What Does This Mean for Developing a Vibrant Multicultural Community?

The local community does provide a range of services to support CALD residents. However the research indicated that there is further work to be done to support the settlement of CALD residents within the Toowoomba region, and to promote their belonging and connection to the community. Our review of existing policies indicated that a multicultural strategy for Toowoomba must recognise the cultural heritage of all residents, and not just those who come from CALD backgrounds. It is our belief that creating stronger community connections within the community will benefit all residents.

A contemporary multicultural Strategy must provide a blueprint for our future, and have an emphasis on creating a community that promotes inclusion, values diversity, and encourages authentic cultural exchange and friendship. With these aspirations in mind, we see the value that interculturalism has in stretching us towards this vision for our community, as this approach focuses on the interaction between all people within a community.

A vibrant multicultural community will not develop haphazardly, but instead requires planning, consultation, and monitoring of progress towards the goals within the plan. To develop an Intercultural Strategy for our community, we implemented the following policy development process:

STEP 01

Evidence-based Action Plan

To shape the goals, strategies and actions, we drew on the findings of the Multicultural Needs Analysis to ensure that the needs and inspiration identified by the community are central to the action plan.

STEP 02

Literature Review

Acknowledging the limitations of all research, we also conducted a grey literature review of multiculturalism policies from other local government areas, national and international frameworks. This allowed us to align the strategy with the broader field, and identified good practice principles and initiatives.

STEP 03

Goal Development

We developed a strategy action plan centered around broad goals with a clear definition of their intended purpose, subsequent strategies and specific actions. In alignment with Council's operational processes, our approach ensured that each element is realistic, achievable, sustainable and both socially and financially responsible.

STEP 04

Framework Selection

Woven throughout the strategy and its action plan are a developmental approach, focusing on human and community growth, and an intercultural perspective, both are a practical guide to achieving the strategy goals.

STEP 05

Embedding Key Principles

There are a number of important values that have influenced goals, strategies and actions aimed at achieving the overarching objective of creating an inclusive, sustainable and meaningful community. These principles include community development, interculturalism, self-determination and sustainability.

STEP 06

Iterative Consultation

Throughout the process of developing the strategy, we engaged in extensive internal consultation to ensure organisational alignment, promote cross departmental collaboration, and enhance the effective delivery of the strategy. We also conducted external consultation, which included several strategy feedback workshops with members of the CALD community and sector representatives, along with an online survey open to the residents in the region. These efforts were designed to include stakeholder views to support multiculturalism within our community.

Our Role in Continuing to Develop a Multicultural Community

Council acknowledges the valuable contributions and richness that culturally diverse residents make to our region, and we are cognisant of their unique needs to settle, participate and thrive in their new home. As the level of government closest to the community, we are committed to supporting culturally diverse residents, a commitment we share with all community stakeholders.

Encouraging our region to embrace diversity and engage in respectful dialogue and exchange offers many benefits. This not only enriches our community but also strengthens the bonds between all residents, which is fundamental to societal wellbeing.

Our approach to building a harmonious and vibrant region occurs at the intersection of local government, community development and culturally responsive initiatives. We embrace a variety of roles as part of our practice, each of which contributes to the outcomes of this strategy:

<p>AWARENESS We create space for culturally diverse people's voices, consider their views and promote understanding of their experiences.</p>	<p>ACTION We fund, plan and deliver programs to support culturally diverse people's connections, wellbeing and belonging.</p>
<p>ACTIVATION We broker connections, facilitate the work of local people and form partnerships to achieve common goals.</p>	<p>ADVOCACY We are active in local networks, channel the sector's knowledge and advocate for culturally diverse people's interests to the tiers of government.</p>

PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Our approach to building a cohesive local community is deeply rooted in a co-philosophy (co from collective), cultural exchange and self-determination. We engage in deep, collaborative efforts with culturally diverse people, the sector and the wider community to understand the complex and intersectional needs our communities experience. By jointly identifying these needs and co-creating initiatives, we develop responses that are not only inclusive but also reflective of the diverse voices within the community.

Our approach extends through every phase of our projects, from co-implementation to co-evaluation, we ensure that all stakeholders have a hand in shaping outcomes. We create genuine connections and build a foundation of trust, mutual respect and reciprocity, which are important for sustainable community development endeavours.





PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Our practice involves initiatives designed to promote support, inclusion, and participation within our diverse community. These initiatives range from grant and sponsorship programs aimed at empowering community-led projects, to the facilitation of cultural exchanges and advisory roles that influence local governance.

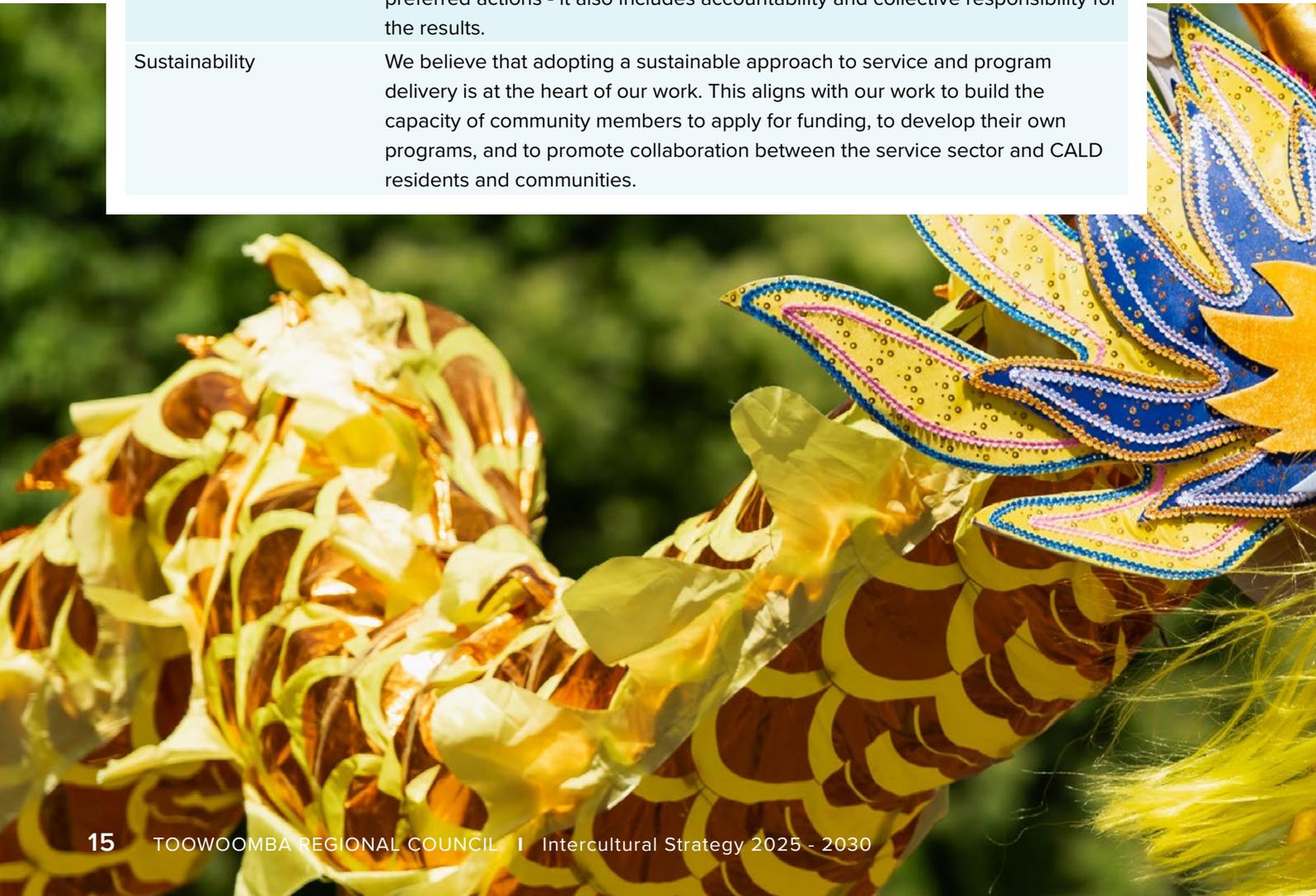
By focusing on collaborative approaches, resource sharing, and active participation in community events, these initiatives collectively strive to enhance the quality of life and ensure that all voices are heard and considered in shaping the community's future.

Support	Inclusion	Participation
A Grants and Sponsorship program to empower and support communities to initiate and lead projects that have a lasting positive impact.	The Cultural Diversity Network focuses on information sharing and exchange of ideas to enhance service delivery and learning about community needs.	Council participates in events organised by CALD residents as a commitment to embracing and celebrating the cultures that enrich the region.
Access to community facilities that serve as hubs for educational, cultural, and recreational activities, as well as programming designed to cater to the diverse needs of the region's residents.	The Multicultural Advisory Committee advises Council on matters related to multiculturalism, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of culturally diverse residents are considered in local governance.	Council actively engages in interagency networks and participates in meetings specifically aimed at supporting culturally diverse residents. This helps us understand the unique and diverse needs of communities and work collaboratively to address these needs.
Facilitated partnerships and support of CALD groups in their development through capability development.	Through consultations, pulse surveys and other engagement types, Council seeks to include the community's voice in its decision-making processes and in the provision of culturally responsive services.	Council represents the interest of CALD people at the state and federal levels and advocates for resources and policies to ensure better outcomes for its residents.

Strategy Principles

The Intercultural Strategy 2025 - 2030 is underpinned by several principles that will influence our practice to achieve the intended goals of the strategy. These principles will help our broad objective to create an inclusive multicultural community, which promotes authentic collaboration, fosters meaningful cultural exchange, and values the cultural heritage and linguistic differences of all residents. The principles align with the values that CALD residents highlighted as being important to them in Council's Needs Analysis of Culturally Diverse Communities in the Toowoomba Region (Blila et al., 2023). We see the following principles as being essential to our work:

Community Development	Our focus on community development operates on several levels. We recognise the rich diversity within our multicultural community, and see this as a valuable resource to help achieve our vision to create a vibrant multicultural community. We will work with individuals, community groups, and organisations as part of our practice, which may involve opportunities for co-planning, activities to develop community capacity, and collecting feedback from the community about our progress.
Interculturalism	We work towards social cohesion through supporting and facilitating initiatives that proactively cultivate positive relationships and encourage interaction among all residents, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Our approach is founded on mutual understanding, respect for all cultures, and collaboration to create an inclusive community where everyone feels valued and connected.
Self-determination	Giving community members and groups the opportunity to co-develop goals and plans that directly affect them is a key aspect of self-determination. Equally important is involving them in evaluating these co-developed plans for our multicultural community, fostering a shared responsibility for outcomes. Self-determination goes beyond making independent decisions and advocating for preferred actions - it also includes accountability and collective responsibility for the results.
Sustainability	We believe that adopting a sustainable approach to service and program delivery is at the heart of our work. This aligns with our work to build the capacity of community members to apply for funding, to develop their own programs, and to promote collaboration between the service sector and CALD residents and communities.



Goals of the Intercultural Strategy 2025 - 2030

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to create a vibrant, inclusive community where diverse cultures are celebrated, respected, and woven into the fabric of everyday life, fostering unity, understanding, and shared prosperity.

ORGANISATION OF THE INTERCULTURAL STRATEGY 2025 - 2030

The Intercultural Strategy 2025-2030 is built around four interconnected goals, informed by our research into the needs of CALD residents, and grounded in the belief that genuine interactions and connections between people and groups from different cultures will nurture a vibrant multicultural community.

Each goal is focused on a specific system that supports people to grow and thrive (the individual, micro, meso, and macro systems). Two strategic actions for each goal have been included to guide our work towards achieving each goal, with four priority activities included for each strategic action.

These goals build upon our current practice while introducing new initiatives to address emerging community challenges and needs identified through our research. The goals aim to support new and existing CALD residents, while also fostering a vibrant multicultural community that encourages positive interactions between all residents.

GOAL SUMMARY

Goal 1 Successful transitions and connectedness (individual focus)

Goal 2 Cultural awareness and exchange (micro system focus)

Goal 3 Community engagement and participation (meso systems level)

Goal 4 Inclusive practice and advocacy (macro systems focus)



Goal 1

Successful transitions and connectedness (individual focus)

This goal is focused on culturally diverse residents, specifically the support required to transition to living within the Toowoomba Region and also the provision of opportunities to experience a full and rewarding life through the development of strong connection with the community.

Strategic Actions and Activities

1.1. Identify and promote awareness of services to support culturally diverse residents in their transition to and understanding of living in Toowoomba, and enhance the capacity of local support providers to develop community programs that support this transition.

1.1.1 Collaborate with community organisations, service providers and government agencies to identify the services and referral pathways to connect culturally diverse residents to existing support for their transition to living in the Toowoomba Region (e.g., housing, employment, education, career advising).

1.1.2 Disseminate resources for culturally diverse residents that share information about services that support their transition to life in the Toowoomba Region.

1.1.3 Identify Council policies, guidelines and forms to be translated to community languages to enhance access and inclusion of culturally diverse residents in the community.

1.1.4 Provide professional development opportunities for community organisations and service providers to develop programs for supporting the transitional needs of culturally diverse residents.

1.2 Provide ongoing coordination to enhance the wellbeing, connectedness and lifelong learning of culturally diverse residents.

1.2.1 Identify and promote service providers who provide ongoing opportunities for English language learning programs to support the ongoing language needs of culturally diverse residents.

1.2.2 Liaise with local employers and business networks to understand employment needs, and organise mechanisms for promoting employment opportunities for culturally diverse residents.

1.2.3 Work with service providers to develop and promote community programs that address specific needs that arise from the intersection of diversity with other demographics (e.g., culturally diverse women, culturally diverse youth).

1.2.4 Liaise with education and training providers and advocate for the development of resources that can be shared with culturally diverse residents about further training to meet career aspirations.

Goal 2 Cultural awareness and exchange (micro system focus)

To take actions that enhance the inclusivity of the Toowoomba community for culturally diverse residents. This includes actions that promote cultural understanding and awareness, and opportunities for all residents to share/exchange their cultural understandings.

Strategic Actions and Activities

- 2.1 Create and promote opportunities for community residents and Council employees to develop cultural literacy and to celebrate the contribution that culturally diverse residents make to the community.**
 - 2.1.1 Organise training programs to develop the cultural competence of Council staff to promote understanding, respect and inclusivity for individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
 - 2.1.2 Ensure that Council communication campaigns/plan promote the values of cultural diversity and inclusivity, and emphasise the importance of respecting all individuals, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.
 - 2.1.3 Collect data from culturally diverse residents about their perceptions of community inclusion, which can be used for policy and program development.
 - 2.1.4 Create a community award and recognition program to celebrate the contributions of culturally diverse residents, businesses, and organisations, and communicate these achievements to the Toowoomba community.
- 2.2 Create and promote opportunities for culturally diverse residents to share their cultural heritage with the community.**
 - 2.2.1 Provide procedural support for organisations that host festivals and events that celebrate cultural diversity and suggest communication strategies for promoting their events to the broader community
 - 2.2.2 Create, maintain and promote an online calendar of events that showcases cultural events, festivals, gatherings and award programs in the Toowoomba region.
 - 2.2.3 Provide opportunities for service-providers and local organisations to collaborate with culturally diverse residents to co-plan cultural sharing events.
 - 2.2.4 Offer training opportunities for culturally diverse residents to develop capacities needed to initiate, lead and deliver activities, programs as informed by their own interests, unique talents and perspectives. Build capacity of the region to deliver activation (local laws, events, grant applications).

Goal 3

Community engagement and participation (meso systems level)

To encourage interaction between culturally diverse residents and the broader community, and to foster the participation of culturally diverse residents in the community. Legitimate participation extends beyond involvement, and instead sees that culturally diverse residents have parity in their contribution to community initiatives and voice in matters that specifically relate to multicultural policies and initiatives.

Strategic Actions and Activities

3.1 Continue to develop initiatives where cultural and linguistic differences are recognised, shared, and integrated within the community environment.

- 3.1.1 Include culturally diverse perspectives in planning and development to meet the cultural and spiritual needs of diverse communities, parks, property services and ensure that public spaces are inclusive and represent the region's cultural diversity through creating signage in community languages, curate mural artworks representing culturally diverse heritage.
- 3.1.2 Support community organisations to develop programs that foster cultural exchange between all community cultural groups (e.g., Intercultural storytelling, integration of cultural arts within existing community events, sports and service clubs.)
- 3.1.3 Investigate opportunities for engaging culturally diverse residents with existing Council volunteer programs and opportunities to promote civic participation and interaction between residents. Identify potential volunteer programs that support culturally diverse residents (e.g., culturally diverse entrepreneurship mentoring).
- 3.1.4 Support and allocate resources for opportunities that promote the expression and preservation of cultural diversity (library collections, children's books, language maintenance programs).

3.2 Foster inclusive and equitable community engagement for culturally diverse residents by providing safe opportunities to share their perspectives, develop community leaders, and support the participation of vulnerable culturally diverse residents.

- 3.2.1 Ensure that culturally diverse perspectives are considered in the development of Council policies and processes.
- 3.2.2 Continue to support the Multicultural Advisory Committee as a platform to maintain leadership opportunities where members provide perspectives about community issues that impact culturally diverse residents and provide advice about potential solutions.
- 3.2.3 Participate in strategic community networks and meetings – facilitated by recognised culturally diverse community leaders to gather feedback from residents about Council initiatives to ensure that information about Council and its services are disseminated.
- 3.2.4 Provide opportunities for faith/interfaith leaders and organisations to share their suggestions for strengthening community approaches to engage and include culturally diverse residents.

Goal 4 Inclusive practice and advocacy (macro systems focus)

This goal is about mainstreaming cultural inclusion across Council's policies and practices via improved understanding of communities, working collaboratively towards a shared agenda and advocacy to all tiers of government about the local needs of culturally diverse communities.

Strategic Actions and Activities

4.1 Promote community inclusion of culturally diverse residents through the consideration of multicultural perspectives and needs in council policy, and by collaboration with local agencies (e.g., community groups, service-providers).

4.1.1 Review Council policies to ensure alignment with Intercultural Strategy that is underpinned by principles of diversity, inclusion, and equality.

4.1.2 Analyse and use available datasets to understand the needs of culturally diverse residents to inform Council decision-making, policy development and service-provision.

4.1.3 Collaborate with community organisations to promote anti-discrimination initiatives that combat racism, xenophobia, and discrimination in the local community.

4.1.4 Facilitate collaboration with local service providers through the Council's Cultural Diversity Network and the Multicultural Advisory Committee to develop coordinated responses to the needs of culturally diverse residents.

4.2 Advocate for the specific needs of culturally diverse residents to different tiers of government and agencies.

4.2.1 Advocate for funding for local initiatives to support multicultural activities and programs.

4.2.2 Promote opportunities within Toowoomba where culturally diverse residents can advocate directly to state and federal departments and service providers (through the Multicultural Advisory Committee and the Cultural Diversity Network).

4.2.3 Collect feedback from residents and service providers and advise state and federal departments about the needs of culturally diverse communities to inform policy and funding (e.g., access to transportation, housing, health, education, migration).

4.2.4 Communicate advocacy actions that have been completed to local community residents (e.g., strategy annual reports).

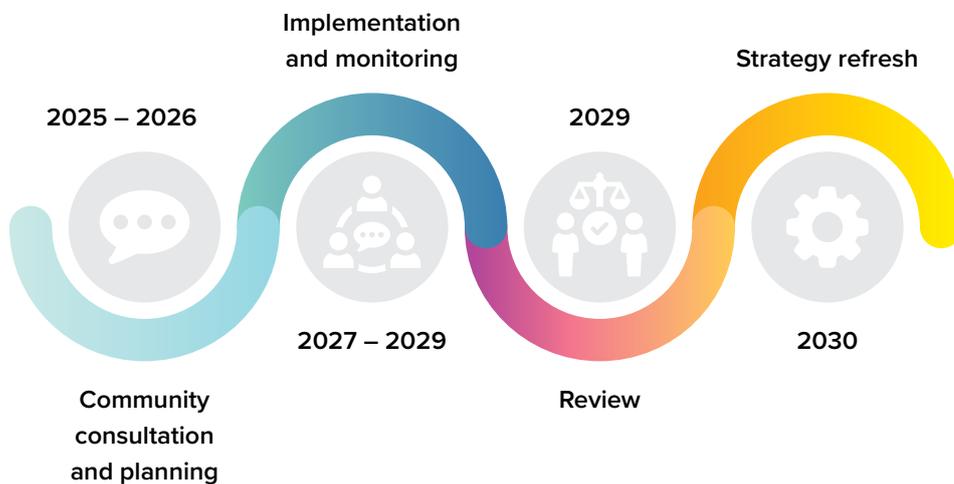
Our Monitoring and Evaluation

The Intercultural Strategy 2025–2030 is our next step in developing self-reliant and sustainable communities, enhancing the connections between community members, and creating a vibrant multicultural community within our region. The Strategy strengthens the foundations of our approach to community development, renews our commitment to coordination alongside our regional multicultural sector, and sets a positive vision for our ongoing work with culturally diverse residents and the broader community.

This Strategy is a living document. As we continue this shared journey, our action plan will be adjusted as required in attunement with changing community needs, priorities and expectations. We welcome contributions from our communities to support, deliver and sustain the strategy’s outcomes.

Our progress will be measured against the Intercultural Strategy’s deliverables as set out in the action plan, timeframes and availability of funding sources. Monitoring will be conducted through operational planning, regular reporting, and periodic evaluation meetings with our Multicultural Advisory Committee. In addition to accountability for our quantitative deliverables, our reporting will place a special emphasis on social outcomes achieved for CALD residents and the systems surrounding them.

The Strategy’s lifecycle will close with a review of our learning and practice, followed by a phase of refreshed development and community consultation.



Glossary

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) persons	Culturally and linguistically diverse persons are individuals who come from different cultural backgrounds and speak various languages, bringing unique traditions, perspectives, and ways of communicating. Their diversity enriches communities by fostering understanding, creativity, and new opportunities for learning and collaboration.
Community	A group of people whose members share common characteristics. They may include communities of place, culture, interests, values and other forms of shared identity (e.g., CALD Community).
Community development	A field of knowledge, principles and practices which supports members of a community to take action on issues important to them. While community development can be facilitated by paid workers, it is a community-led process to problem-solving where power is shared to achieve more effective, sustainable outcomes.
Community engagement	Community engagement is the process of people coming together to share ideas, take action, and make positive changes in their community. It can involve volunteering, participating in local events, or working with others to solve problems and improve the lives of those around them.
Community co-planning	Community co-planning is when people from a neighborhood or group come together to plan projects or events that will help improve their community. Everyone shares their ideas and works together to make decisions, ensuring the plan benefits everyone involved.
Council	Toowoomba Regional Council, being the local government for the Toowoomba Region and including all its employees and affiliates.
Human rights	The universal rights of all human beings to respect, dignity, equality, freedom, justice and adequate standards of living. Enshrined in international human rights law, many of these civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are protected under Australian domestic laws.
Inclusion	Practices which foster environments where all people are valued and respected, regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances.
Intercultural	Intercultural means 'interactions' or 'connections' between people from different cultures, where they share ideas, traditions, and perspectives. It helps people understand and respect each other's differences, creating more inclusive and diverse communities.
Multicultural	Multicultural refers to a society or group that includes people from many different cultural backgrounds, each with their own traditions, languages, and beliefs. A multicultural society includes all, not just those who are culturally diverse.
Participation	The active involvement of members of a community in its decision-making processes.
Self-determination	The fundamental right of people, groups and communities to shape their own lives and futures.
Service Sector	Practitioners and organisations primarily dedicated to working with CALD people in the Toowoomba Region. The regional CALD service sector includes community and faith groups, as well as government and non-government organisations in education, employment, health, disability, family support, child protection, law and justice, and community services.
Toowoomba Region	Refers to the Toowoomba Local Government area.
Wellbeing	A person's overall quality of life, encompassing their physical, mental, emotional and social health. Wellbeing is closely linked with social, economic and environmental conditions, as well as the ability to meaningfully participate in community life.

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As our community grows,
we welcome individuals
and groups from around
australia and the world.

Weaving a Collective Future:

Intercultural Strategy 2025 - 2030

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