



**OFFICE OF
MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS**



DISCUSSION PAPER

A Multicultural Act for Western Australia

November 2025

Ministerial Foreword

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities have made immense contributions to Western Australia's social, cultural and economic success.

Our rich cultural tapestry has helped shape our identity, playing an integral role in what makes this State a great place to live, work and play.

The WA Government acknowledges the importance of our multiculturalism and is committed to ensuring it continues to thrive.



We are now starting an exciting new chapter in our multicultural story—one that you can help write.

I am pleased to invite you to respond to this discussion paper that explores the establishment of a Multicultural Act for Western Australia.

A Multicultural Act for Western Australia would enshrine in law the progress and achievements we have already made in advancing multiculturalism. It would ensure our multiculturalism continues to prosper.

It would promote inclusivity, foster a sense of belonging and shared values, and affirm the contributions of all communities.

However, it is essential that a Multicultural Act reflects the lived experiences of all Western Australians. By taking the time to read this discussion paper and participate in the consultation process, you will play a vital role in achieving this.

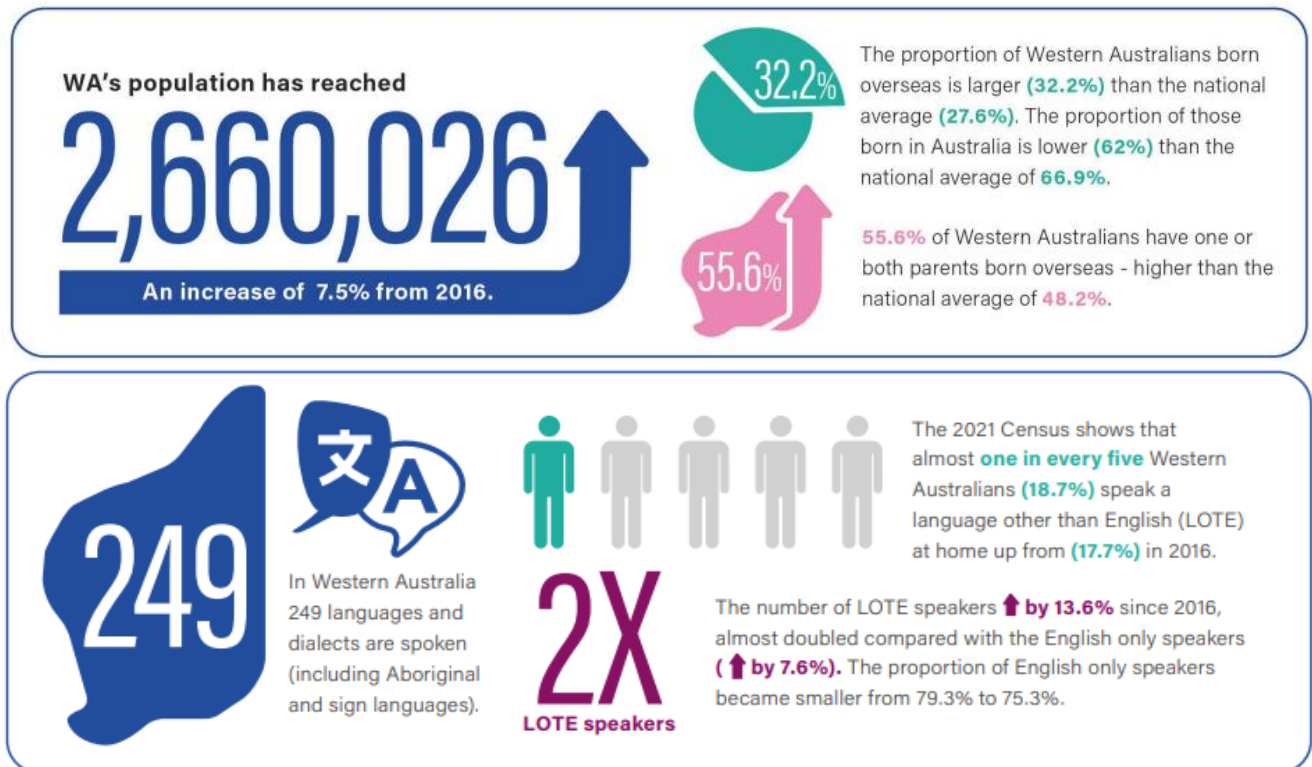
A Multicultural Act for Western Australia will shape and strengthen our society for future generations.

Thank you for taking the time to be part of this process and for having your say on a Multicultural Act for Western Australia.

Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA
Minister for Multicultural Interests

Introduction: Why WA is considering a Multicultural Act

Based on the 2021 Census, Western Australia is home to people from all over the world—more than 32% of us were born overseas, and we speak over 249 languages and follow more than 130 religions. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and the WA Government wants to ensure that it is properly recognised and supported.



That's why we're proposing a Multicultural Act—a law that would formally commit the State to inclusion and fairness for everyone, no matter their cultural or linguistic background. It would help ensure that government decisions, services, and policies reflect multicultural values like respect, equity, participation, and belonging.

Other states and territories in Australia—Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and the ACT—already have similar laws. Canada is the only country with a national Multicultural Act.

WA already supports multiculturalism through:

- the WA Charter of Multiculturalism
- the Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council
- policies like the WA Multicultural Policy Framework, Language Services Policy, and Framework for Substantive Equality.

These policies also acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples, as First Peoples of Australia, have a unique place in society and that their cultures and histories are central to WA's identity. A truly inclusive Multicultural Act must reflect this and support laws like the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and the *Native Title Act 1993* which help protect their rights and heritage.



First Nations peoples and people from migrant and refugee backgrounds have vastly different starting points and there are different challenges for each in terms of achieving equitable outcomes. The proposed Multicultural Act aims to support everyone in WA to take part in social, cultural, economic and political life—enabling full participation and recognising the value of our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

As Western Australia approaches its bicentenary in 2029, this milestone also offers an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to inclusion and equity through a Multicultural Act—recognising that over the past two hundred years, people from many cultural backgrounds have shaped WA into the vibrant, diverse State it is today.

Following preliminary consultation with stakeholders, and review of other jurisdictions with multicultural legislation, we identified key areas to help guide the discussion. For more information on a review of multicultural legislation across Australian jurisdictions, please see the [WA Multicultural Act - Research and Findings Report](#).

The WA Government now wants to hear your views on what could be included in a WA Multicultural Act.

Why is a Multicultural Act important?

WA's cultural diversity brings many benefits—new ideas, rich cultures, and strong communities. But it also means we need to work harder to make sure everyone feels included and has fair access to services and opportunities.

A Multicultural Act could:

- confirm Western Australia's long-term commitment to cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity by making it into law
- help create a more united, inclusive and harmonious society, that celebrates diverse cultures
- increase the sense of belonging of people from diverse backgrounds
- support education programs on multiculturalism to build intercultural understanding in the community
- guide WA Government services (like Health, Justice, Education) to be more inclusive, responsive and culturally competent
- encourage greater investment in multicultural initiatives, to help communities thrive in areas such as employment, arts, sport and business
- improve data collection to better address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- strengthen anti-racism measures, including actions to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia, to ensure a safer and fairer WA for all
- align WA with other Australian states and territories that have similar legislation.

Legislation and policy have an important, practical impact on the community. Below are some examples of this in practice.

'The Queensland Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 led to the development of whole-of-government policies and targets for cultural and linguistic diversity across Queensland Government.'

*'Through the recent implementation the WA Public Sector Commission's Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy 2020-25, the representation of people from CaLD backgrounds in WA Public Sector workforce **increased from 13.3% in 2019 to 18.5% in 2025.**'*

*'To ensure outcomes specific to raising cultural competency within the WA Multicultural Policy Framework were met, in 2020, the Diverse WA training platform was transformed and made accessible across State Government, Local Government and not for profit sectors. In the past five years **over 22,000 people** have completed this training, ensuring a more culturally responsive workforce in our State.'*

You can read more about the impact of legislation and policies across Australia in the [WA Multicultural Act - Research and Findings Report](#).

This paper asks: What should be in WA's Multicultural Act? How can it reflect the needs, strengths, and hopes of our diverse communities?

Key stages

August to November 2025

Undertake cross jurisdictional research and review

End of November 2025

Public consultation opens

November 2025—February 2026

Consultation through forums, focus groups, meetings and surveys

15 February 2026

End of consultation and submissions

April 2026

Summary of consultation report shared

May to June 2026

Regulatory proposal development and Cabinet Submission

What should be in WA's Multicultural Act?

Guiding principles

Multiculturalism is built on values that help us live together respectfully and fairly. These can be written into law in different ways—like a preamble, a declaration, a charter or a policy statement. Some laws use a mix of these.

Most laws related to multiculturalism in Australia focus on four key ideas:

- Respect for cultural identity—valuing the heritage, language, and traditions of all communities.
- Fairness and equality—making sure everyone has equal access to services and opportunities, no matter their background.
- Democratic participation—ensuring everyone can take part in civic and political life.
- Diversity as a strength—recognising that cultural differences enrich our society socially, economically, politically and culturally.

Some Acts contain other principles including:

- recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples
- promoting mutual respect and understanding
- acknowledging the contributions of all communities
- seeing cultural and linguistic diversity as a resource for the future
- supporting shared values and a commitment to Australia
- building a united, inclusive, and harmonious society
- taking action against racism and discrimination
- recognising English as the common language.

Key Questions for You

1. What principles and values do you feel are important for a Multicultural Act to include?
2. How could a Multicultural Act better reflect the WA Government's commitment to Aboriginal peoples as Western Australia's First Peoples?
3. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?

Definitions matter

All laws include definitions to make things clearer, including those specific to multiculturalism. For example:

- “Diversity” is defined in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), South Australian and Victorian Acts.
- “Multiculturalism” is defined in the ACT and South Australian Acts.
- “Diverse” is defined in the Victorian Act.
- “Interculturalism” is defined in the South Australian Act.

Adding definitions can help make the law easier to understand and apply.

In WA, the WA Multicultural Policy Framework has many definitions including:

- culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD)
- culture and culturally responsive
- diversity
- ethnicity and race
- institutional/systemic discrimination
- social cohesion
- substantive equality.

Key Questions for You

1. What words do you think would be important to define in a Multicultural Act?
2. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?

Independent multicultural advisory body

To make sure the voices of people from CaLD backgrounds are heard, many jurisdictions in Australia have a multicultural advisory body written into law. These groups give advice to government, promote inclusion, and help shape policies that reflect the needs of CaLD communities. They often:

- advise the relevant Minister on what CaLD communities need and want
- suggest ways to improve multicultural policies and programs
- talk directly with CaLD communities to understand their experiences
- promote unity and understanding across cultures
- raise awareness about multiculturalism and the impact of racism
- work with organisations, including government agencies, to address discrimination and racial abuse.

Some multicultural laws in other states and territories set rules for how these groups work, including:

- who can be a member (e.g. Australian citizens or permanent residents)
- making sure members reflect a mix of cultures, genders, ages, and regions
- how long members serve and how they're chosen (often through expressions of interest)
- how often they meet and what reports they must provide.

Key Questions for You

1. Do you think a Multicultural Act should include a multicultural advisory body?
2. What responsibilities do you think an advisory body should have?
3. What specific areas of expertise could be considered when selecting members for the advisory body?
4. What's the best way for an advisory body to connect with CaLD communities?
5. How could an advisory body share its activities and achievements?
6. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?

Public sector responsibilities

Some jurisdictions require WA Government agencies to follow multicultural policies to make sure their policies, programs and services are responsive to diverse needs, and report on their progress. This includes:

- using interpreters and translators
- collecting cultural and language data
- communicating in languages other than English
- engaging with multicultural media
- ensuring diverse representation on boards and committees.

WA already has three key policies that support multicultural goals, but they are not part of any law. These are shared below.

WA Multicultural Policy Framework (WAMPF)

Launched in 2020, the WAMPF helps WA Government agencies make their services inclusive and responsive to CaLD communities. It focuses on:

- building harmonious and inclusive communities
- making sure policies, programs and services are culturally responsive
- supporting economic, cultural, civic participation.

Agencies are expected to achieve this through:

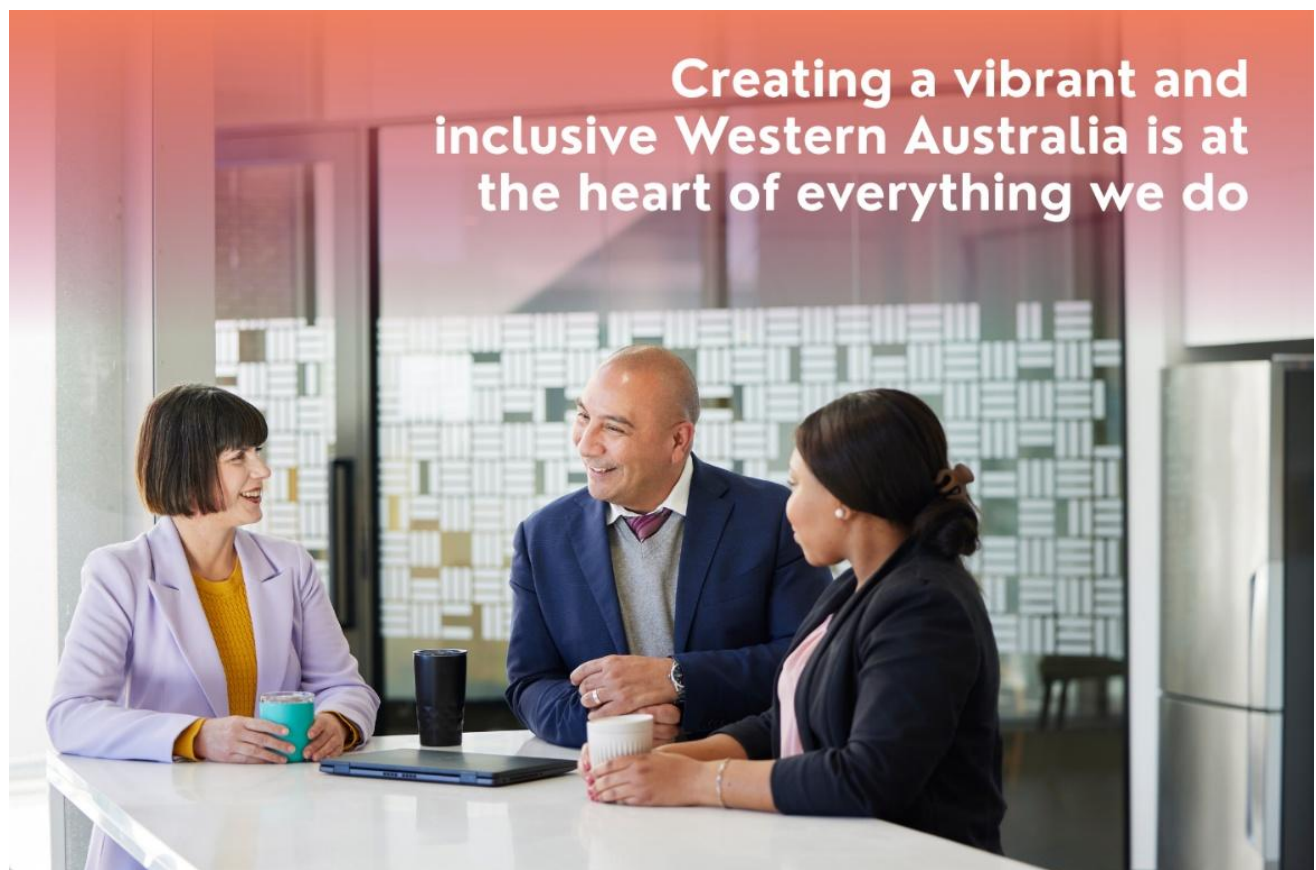
- providing language services (for example, interpreters and translators)
- collecting cultural and language data
- promoting CaLD representation on in decision-making boards and committees
- upholding inclusive recruitment practices
- addressing racism and discrimination
- partnering with CaLD communities in design, delivery and evaluation of initiatives.

Each year, agencies report on their progress to OMI and a summary report for the Minister for Multicultural Interests is prepared. However, the Minister doesn't have to report to Parliament.

WA Language Services Policy 2020

This policy ensures fair access to WA Government services for people who don't speak or understand Standard Australian English—including some First Nations people, CaLD communities, and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Agencies must:

- let clients know they can ask for an interpreter
- provide free language services when needed for safety
- train staff in cultural competency and working with interpreters
- budget for translation and multilingual communication costs
- use qualified interpreters and translators (for example, tertiary trained and/or certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translating and Interpreting).



Policy Framework for Substantive Equality

This framework helps WA Government agencies tackle systemic discrimination and deliver services that meet people's different needs. It focuses on:

- understanding community needs
- monitoring service outcomes
- improving government agency performance
- training staff to be inclusive.

It's designed to help agencies remove unfair systems and make services more equitable for everyone.

Key Questions for You

1. Do you think policies that require government authorities to respond to diverse needs (such as above), should be included in a Multicultural Act?
2. If yes, what policies do you think are the most important and should be included in a Multicultural Act?
3. Do you think the WA Government is doing enough to support CaLD communities in WA? If not, what else should be done and how could this be reflected in a Multicultural Act?
4. What sectors do you think should be responsible for implementing a Multicultural Act (for example, public sector, local government)?
5. What information do you think should be shared to demonstrate how the Multicultural Act is being used and making a difference?
6. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?

Regional communities

To truly support multiculturalism across WA, the Multicultural Act should include everyone—no matter where they live. That means making sure regional areas are part of the picture.

Other states already do this:

- Victoria has 8 regional advisory councils that inform the Victorian Multicultural Commission about local issues. Agencies must also report on how they're supporting multicultural communities in rural and regional areas.
- South Australia's Multicultural Act includes local councils.

- In New South Wales, local councils must report on how they're implementing multicultural policies. New South Wales also has 10 regional advisory councils that connect communities with government.

In WA, the *Local Government Act 1995* encourages community participation in council decisions. Local governments must create a Strategic Community Plan (SCP) that looks 10 years ahead and is reviewed every four years. These plans are shaped by community input—including from CaLD communities—but there's no legal requirement for councils to specifically address multicultural needs.

Key Questions for You

1. How could a Multicultural Act ensure the issues of rural, regional and remote communities are considered?
2. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments related to this section?

What else?

We are keen to know your thoughts on any other components that could be considered in the development of a Multicultural Act.

Key Questions for You

1. Is there anything else that should be included in a WA Multicultural Act?

Submitting your feedback

You can submit your response by 15 February 2026 to this discussion paper through two options:

1. Share your feedback through this [online survey](#)
2. Send your submission via email to multiculturalact@omi.wa.gov.au.



If you would like to share your feedback in a different language through an interpreter or need any translated material in relation to the Act's development, please contact OMI on 6552 1607, and we will arrange relevant support.

Snapshot of Multicultural Acts across Australian states and territories

	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	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 (including local 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