

MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR MULTICULTURALISM

Annual Report 2023 -2024

1 September 2023 – 30 June 2024

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACT Government	Government of the Australian Capital Territory
EPIC	Exhibition Park in Canberra
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
CSD	Community Services Directorate
MACM	Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
OMA	Office of Multicultural Affairs
ToR	Terms of Reference
VAD	Voluntary Assisted Dying

Technical Glossary

Charter for Multiculturalism

A set of principles established under the *Multiculturalism Act 2023 (ACT)* guiding the ACT Government's commitment to promoting cultural diversity and inclusion.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

A commonly used policy term referring to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and/or who speak languages other than English.

Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism (MACM)

An advisory body established under the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* to provide advice to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Multiculturalism Act 2023

ACT legislation establishing the Charter for Multiculturalism and the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism.

Office of Multicultural Affairs

A unit within the Community Services Directorate (CSD) responsible for multicultural policy and secretariat support to MACM.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land on which the ACT community gathers and lives. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise the enduring contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the cultural life of the ACT.

We acknowledge the diverse multicultural communities of the ACT and the significant contributions migrant, refugee, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities make to the social, cultural and economic life of Canberra.

Wednesday 1 April 2026

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA,
Minister for Multicultural Affairs
ACT Legislative Assembly
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Minister Pettersson

2023 - 2024 Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism Annual Report

I am pleased to present the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism Annual Report for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.

This report outlines the activities and performance of the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism (MACM), for the reporting period 1 September 2023 to 30 June 2024. This is the first year of service of this term of the MACM.

This report has been prepared in accordance with section 7(2) of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

It has been prepared in consideration and conformity with other legislation applicable to the preparation of the Annual Report by the MACM.

I certify that information in the attached annual report, is an honest and accurate account and that all material information on the operations of the MACM has been included for the period 1 September 2023 to 30 June 2024.

I hereby certify that fraud prevention has been managed in accordance with the *Public Sector Management Standards 2006* (repealed), Part 2.3 (see section 113, *Public Sector Management Standards 2016*).

Yours sincerely

Miss Izabela Barakovska
Chair
Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism

Chair's Foreword

The establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism (MACM, the Council) marks an important milestone for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and its multicultural community.

The Council commenced its term on 1 September 2023, following the enactment of the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* (the Act), which enshrined the Charter for Multiculturalism and established the Council as a statutory advisory body to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

During its first year of operation, the Council worked to strengthen connection between the government and multicultural communities. Through engagement across government, industry, and community sectors, the Council worked to build meaningful relationships to support proactive and strategic engagement with multicultural communities.

This also enabled the Council to better understand the diverse challenges, needs, experiences, and perspectives within the ACT's multicultural communities, including the impacts of intersectionality.

The 11 members of the Council brought their lived experience and professional expertise to discussions on policy and service delivery affecting culturally, linguistically and spiritually diverse communities across ACT.

Throughout the reporting period the Council contributed advice on several significant initiatives, including:

- Canberra Theatre redevelopment
- EPIC Fitzroy Pavilion refurbishment
- Disaster Risk and Resilience Plan
- Engagement with Elections ACT
- Consultations on anti-racism and workplace inclusion
- Consultation with the ACT Human Rights Commission
- Input to work led by the City Renewal Authority.

A significant contribution during the year was the MACM's engagement with the ACT Legislative Assembly Select Committee on the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023*, including the provision of a written submission and participating in a public hearing.

Council members also participated in more than 35 community consultations, workshops and forums, advocating for multicultural perspectives and strengthening engagement with community organisations.

The MACM looks forward to continuing its work in partnership with community, government and stakeholders to advance the objectives of the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* and to support an inclusive Canberra where everyone feels a sense of belonging and can participate fully in the social, economic, and civil life of the community.

Compliance Statement

The 2023-2024 Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism (MACM) Report must comply with the requirements outlined in the Annual Report Directions (the Directions) made under section 8 of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*. The Directions are the ACT Legislation Register: legislation.act.gov.au.

The Compliance Statement indicates the subsections, under Parts 1 to 5 of the Directions, that are applicable to the MACM and the location of information that satisfies these requirements.

Part 1 – Directions Overview

The requirements under Part 1 of the Directions relate to the purpose, timing and distribution, and record-keeping of annual reports. The 2023-2024 MACM Annual Report complies with all subsections of Part 1 of the Directions. The report provides an overview of the MACM's activities during 2023–2024.

To comply with section 15, Feedback, in Part 1 of the Directions, the 2023 – 2024 MACM Annual Report provides contact details for the Council, giving readers the opportunity to provide feedback.

Part 2 – Reporting Entity Annual Report Requirements

The requirement within Part 2 of the Directions is mandatory for all reporting entities and the MACM complies with all subsections. The information that satisfies the requirements of Part 2 is found in the 2023-2024 MACM Annual Report as follows:

- a. Transmittal Certificate, see page 5
- b. MACM's Overview, inclusive of all subsections, see page 8
- c. MACM's and performance and activities, inclusive of all subsections, see page 10
- d. MAMC's governance and administration, see page 16
- e. MACM's future priorities, see page 17.

Part 3 – Reporting by Exception

The Council has nil information to report by exception under Part 3 of the Directions for the 2023 – 2024 reporting year.

Part 4 – Directorate and Public Sector Body specific Annual Report Requirements

The following subsections of Part 4 of the 2023 Direction are applicable to the MACM and can be found within the 2023 -2024 Council's Annual Report.

1. *Multiculturalism Act 2023, part 4, section 15*
2. *Charter for Multiculturalism*
3. *Terms of Reference*

SECTION 1 – OVERVIEW

1.1. Purpose and Role of the Council

The Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism (MACM, the Council) provides advice to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on matters affecting culturally, linguistically and spiritually diverse communities.

The MACM supports the implementation of the Charter for Multiculturalism outlined in the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* and promotes inclusive policy development across government.

Acting as a bridge between government and multicultural communities, the Council ensures that emerging issues and diverse perspectives are considered in the development of policies and programs that meet the needs – and reflect the aspirations and experiences – of Canberra’s multicultural communities.

The Council works closely with:

- ACT Government directorates
- community organisations
- service providers
- advisory bodies
- multicultural peak organisations.

The MACM’s work supports the ACT Government’s broader objective of promoting multiculturalism and ensuring that Canberra remains an inclusive and welcoming city.

1.2. Overview of the MACM

The MACM is a statutory advisory body that provides advice to the ACT Minister for Multicultural Affairs on issues affecting culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Established under the *Multiculturalism Act 2023*, the MACM’s first term commenced on 1 September 2023. The MACM formalises the ACT Government’s commitment to multiculturalism, inclusion, and belonging.

The Council consists of 11 members, including a Chair and Deputy Chair. MACM members are selected through a merit-based appointment process and bring diverse professional expertise, lived experience, and community perspectives.

The Council also serves as a mechanism for engagement between government and multicultural communities, providing strategic advice, identify emerging issues, and supporting improved engagement across government and the community.

1.3. Legislative and Governance Framework

MACM operates under the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* and its Terms of Reference (ToR).

The Act establishes the Charter for Multiculturalism, which sets out principles to guide government policy and promote cultural diversity, inclusion and participation across the ACT.

The Act also establishes the MACM as a formal advisory body to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The Act sets out the reporting obligations relating to multicultural policy.

The Council's governance arrangements are supported by the MACM ToR, which outline:

- membership arrangements
- roles and responsibilities of Council members
- appointment processes
- functions of the Council
- meeting procedures
- reporting arrangements.

The Council operates within the broader governance framework of the ACT Government and is supported administratively by the Office for Multicultural Affairs (OMA) within the Community Services Directorate (CSD).

1.4. Functions of the Council

Under the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* and MACM ToR, the Council's primary functions include:

- providing advice to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on matters affecting culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- promoting the principles of the Charter for Multiculturalism
- identifying emerging issues affecting multicultural communities
- facilitating engagement between government and multicultural communities
- supporting community participation in policy development.

The Council also supports whole-of-government initiatives to strengthen community participation and reduce barriers to engagement.

Through these functions, the Council provides strategic advice to the Minister, drawing on community perspectives to inform policies and programs affecting multicultural communities.

SECTION 2 – PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITIES

2.1. Council Membership Profile

The MACM consists of 11 members including a Chair and Deputy Chair. Members bring experience in community leadership, policy development and multicultural advocacy.

Member	Role	Term
Izabela Barakovska	Chair	2023-2026
Shanti Reddy	Deputy Chair	2023-2026
Timothy Sunwoo	Member	2023-2026
Arun Bharatula	Member	2023-2026
Sukriti Kapoor	Member	2023-2026
Zakia Patel	Member	2023-2026
Lew Ching Yip	Member	2023-2026
Sultana Lubna Alam	Member	2023-2026
Efe Momoh	Member	2023-2026
Ivapene Seiuli	Member	2023-2026
Chin Wong	Member	2023-2026

Table 1: MACM Members

2.2. Council Meetings

During 2023–2024 the Council held five formal sitting meetings.

Meeting	Date
1	27 September 2023
2	7 November 2023
3	27 February 2024
4	29 April 2024
5	25 June 2024

Table 2: MACM Meeting during the 2023-2024 reporting period

Meetings provided an opportunity for members to discuss policy developments, receive briefings from ACT Government directorates and statutory authorities, and provide advice on emerging issues affecting multicultural communities.

Key topics discussed during the reporting period included:

- Major infrastructure and urban development projects
- Community engagement and consultation
- Disaster preparedness, resilience and recovery
- Human rights, legislative reform and policy development
- Utilities and consumer services
- Public health and wellbeing, including suicide prevention, gambling harm reduction, and aged care initiatives
- Anti-racism and workplace inclusion
- Promoting multiculturalism and multicultural perspectives through events, networks, and media

- Development of the Council’s work plan and preparation for the inaugural community consultation event.

2.3. Work Plan and Priorities

During its first year the Council focused on:

- establishing governance arrangements
- developing and commencing work under a formal work plan
- strengthening consultation with multicultural communities
- contributing multicultural perspectives to government policy
- promoting multiculturalism across the ACT community
- raising awareness of the Council’s role and functions
- preparation for the inaugural community consultation forum.

2.4. Key Activities and Advice to Government

Throughout the reporting period the Council provided advice and input across a range of policy and community issues including:

- Canberra Theatre redevelopment
- EPIC Fitzroy Pavilion refurbishment
- Elections ACT engagement
- Disaster Risk and Resilience Plan
- ACT Suicide Prevention Community Collaborative
- Gambling Harm Prevention Community of Practice
- Utilities and consumer services panels
- Anti-racism and workplace inclusion
- Consultations with the ACT Human Rights Commission.

The Council also contributed to the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023*, providing a written submission and presenting evidence at a public hearing with the Select Committee.

In its submission and evidence, the Council emphasises the need for culturally, linguistically, and spiritually appropriate information, support, and engagement pathways so that Canberra’s diverse communities can understand and access voluntary assisted dying in ways that respect their cultural values and lived experiences. This advice directly contributed to ensuring multicultural perspectives were considered during the development of the legislation.

The written submission is available on the [ACT Legislative Assembly Website](#), with further information on the Inquiry available [here](#).

2.5. Key Advice Provided to Government

Policy Area	Engagement	Outcome
Infrastructure planning	Canberra Theatre redevelopment	Multicultural community perspectives considered in planning, engagement, and accessibility discussions.
Public Facilities and community infrastructure	EPIC Fitzroy Pavilion refurbishment	Feedback provided on accessibility, inclusion, and community use of facilities. Compiled and circulated a list of available venues for community to use in the ACT as a quick reference guide.

Electoral participation	Engagement with Election ACT	Input provided on culturally inclusive communication and engagement strategies to support participation, including on risks of mis- and disinformation, and the role of media literacy and trust in public institutions.
Disaster preparedness, resilience and recovery	Disaster Risk and Resilience Plan	Advice provided on community engagement, culturally appropriate preparedness strategies, and shifting perspectives to consider not only the vulnerabilities but strength and resilience of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
Legislative reform	<i>Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill</i> Inquiry	Written submission and public hearing to ensure cultural, spiritual, and community perspectives were considered, including the need for culturally appropriate information and implementation for diverse communities.
Public health and wellbeing	ACT Suicide Prevention Community Collaborative	Multicultural perspectives contributed to community wellbeing and suicide prevention initiatives.
Gambling harm prevention	Gambling Harm Prevention Community of Practice	Advice provided on culturally informed approaches to gambling harm prevention, cultural influences on gambling harm prevention, including cultural influences on gambling behaviour, stigma associated with help-seeking, and intergenerational impacts within multicultural communities.
Utilities and consumer services	Evo Energy Consumer Reference Council and Icon Water Customer Advisory Panel	Advocated for multicultural consumer perspectives in the development of the ACT's energy policy for the next decade, highlighting issues such as access to information and support, and the need for an equitable approach to transition from gas to electricity and gas network services.
Human rights and community inclusion	Consultation with the ACT Human Rights Commission (HRC)	Contributing multicultural community perspectives on experiences of racism, discrimination, and access to human rights information and complaints processes, to support more inclusive human rights engagement.
Community inclusion and reconciliation	Engagement with the ACT Reconciliation Council	Strengthened understanding of the connections between multiculturalism and reconciliation, including the importance of respectful dialogue, shared values of inclusion, and ongoing collaboration.
Anti-racism and workplace inclusion	Engagement with Diversity Council Australia (DCA); joint	Increased understanding of anti-racism initiatives and factors that contribute to culturally safe workplaces and contributed

	engagement with the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council Australia (FECCA) and the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF)	input into national discussions on frameworks addressing racism, belonging and inclusion, and diverse workforce participation.
Cross-government policy and advisory collaboration	Joint Advisory Council of Chairs (JACC)	Multicultural perspectives shared across advisory councils, supporting cross-government collaboration and consideration of intersectional issues affecting diverse communities.

Table 3: MACM Engagements by Policy Area- Activities and Outcomes

2.6. Performance Analysis

During its inaugural year, the Council focused on establishing itself as a new statutory advisory body under the *Multiculturalism Act 2023*. This included establishing governance arrangements, developing a work plan, building relationships across government and the ACT community, and commencing its advisory functions.

Consistent with its functions under the Act and the Council's Terms of Reference, the Council's performance can be considered across three key areas:

- providing advice to government,
- engaging with multicultural communities, and
- promoting the Charter for Multiculturalism.

Throughout the reporting period, Council members participated in more than 35 meetings, consultations, workshops and events across government, community and advisory sectors. These engagements enabled the Council to contribute multicultural perspectives across a wide range of policy areas and strengthen relationships with stakeholders.

In its first year, the Council also played an important role in raising awareness of its advisory function and establishing itself as a bridge between government and multicultural communities in the ACT. This foundational work has positioned the Council to provide more strategic and proactive advice in future years of its term.

As the Council's inaugural year of operation, performance was primarily focussed on establishing governance arrangements, relationship-building, commencing its advisory and engagement functions, and advocating for multicultural perspectives to be better embedded across government processes.

In future years, the Council will build on this foundation to provide more strategic policy advice, undertake targeted consultation with multicultural communities, and contribute to the implementation of the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* and the Charter of Multiculturalism.

2.7. Performance Summary 2023–2024

Objective	Activity	Outcome
Establish the Council as a statutory advisory body	Governance arrangements and Terms of Reference implementation; meeting schedule and work plan development.	Council successfully commenced operation and established governance and advisory processes.
Provide policy advice to the Minister and government	Participate in community forums, consultations and advisory bodies.	Over 35 engagements across community, government and advisory sectors.
Promote the Charter for Multiculturalism	Community engagement, events and community activities.	Increased awareness of multicultural principles and the Council’s role.
Strengthen cross-government collaboration	Participation in advisory groups and Joint Advisory Council of Chairs (JACC).	Multicultural perspectives incorporated into cross-government and cross-portfolio discussions.

Table 4: MACM performance Summary 2023 -2024

2.8. Community Engagement and Stakeholder Collaboration

Community engagement is central for the Council’s role. In its inaugural year, the Council focussed on ensuring engagement – and the routine set for the term ahead – was not only broad, but strategically meaningful. This included providing insights early in policy and project planning to influence outcomes, rather than responding only at later stages when input may have more limited impact.

Members actively participated in consultations and advisory groups, ensuring multicultural perspectives were represented in discussions relating to public policy and service delivery. Their professional and community roles outside the Council further informed these contributions, bringing sector knowledge, lived experience, and established networks that enhanced the relevance and impact of the advice provided.

In doing so, the Council also offered guidance on what constitutes meaningful and effective engagement, recognising that multicultural communities are not homogenous, and that consultation must be tailored to reflect the differing needs, experiences, and levels of prior engagement. This included consideration of underrepresented groups, intersectional impacts, and strategies to ensure all voices are heard and included.

The Council engaged regularly with agencies and participated in cross-government advisory forums, including the JACC, to strengthen collaboration across ACT Government advisory bodies and ensure multicultural perspectives informed broader policy and service development processes.

Council members also participated in key events celebrating diversity across the arts, culture, spirituality, diplomacy, and community, including the ACT 2023 Multicultural Awards; the National Multicultural Festival; a special address by the Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; the Dickson Lunar New Year Festival; the Chief Minister’s Diwali Reception; Iftar dinners; the 2024 ACT Women’s Awards; the 2024 Annual Wang Gungwu Lecture; acting as the Master of Ceremonies for Citizenship Ceremonies, and more. These activities supported relationship-building and enhanced the Council’s visibility in the community.

2.9. Contribution to Multiculturalism in the ACT

Through advice and engagement activities, MACM supports implementation of the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* and promotes multicultural inclusion across the Territory. In particular, the Council's work focuses on shaping how government engages with multicultural communities and ensuring policies and programs are culturally, linguistically, and spiritually informed and inclusive.

Key contributions include:

- promoting the Charter for Multiculturalism
- supporting inclusive policy development
- strengthening engagement with culturally diverse communities, including underrepresented and intersectional groups
- advocating for multicultural perspectives in government consultations and providing guidance on meaningful engagement practices.

SECTION 3 – GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

3.1. Administrative Arrangements

MACM is supported by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (later, Multicultural ACT) within the Community Services Directorate (later, the Health and Community Services Directorate).

The Office provides coordination and secretariat support to the Council and assists with engagement between the Council, key stakeholders, and government agencies.

3.2. Secretariat Support

Secretariat support includes:

- coordinating meetings and preparing agendas and minutes
- supporting policy advice and consultation processes
- coordinating stakeholder engagement
- supporting Council communications and reporting.

The Council can be contacted via the MACM Secretariat at ACTMAC@act.gov.au.

3.3. Remuneration

Remuneration for advisory council members is determined in accordance with relevant ACT Government policies and determinations of the ACT Remuneration Tribunal, where applicable.

3.4. Communication and Engagement

Council members promote awareness of multicultural issues through engagement with community organisations, participation in public events and collaboration with advisory bodies. They attend a wide range of forums, workshops, and consultations, including those that do not traditionally engage multicultural perspectives, to ensure diverse voices inform policy and program development.

The Council also supports communication initiatives that promote the Charter for Multiculturalism. Through these activities, members build strong relationships with communities, government agencies, and stakeholders while advocating for culturally, linguistically, and spiritually inclusive and considerate approaches across the ACT.

The Chair also participates in the Joint Advisory Council of Chairs forum, supporting the MACM to engage across advisory portfolios, sharing insights and fostering collaboration to ensure multicultural perspectives inform broader cross-government initiatives.

SECTION 4 – WORK PLAN

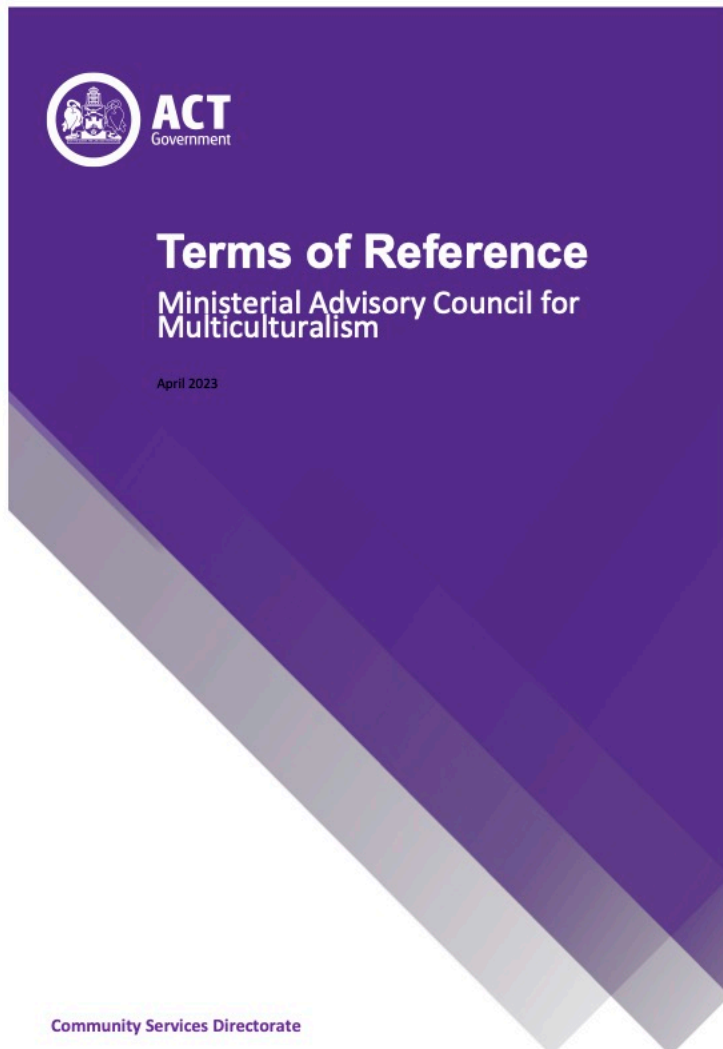
4.1. Priorities for 2024–2025

Key priorities for the Council in the next reporting period include:

- **Strengthening community engagement** by building relationship with a diverse range of multicultural communities, including underrepresented and intersectional groups, and providing guidance on effective, inclusive consultation approaches.
- **Supporting implementation of the *Multiculturalism Act 2023***, ensuring that government policies and programs reflect the Act’s principles and the objectives of the Charter for Multiculturalism.
- **Promoting the Charter for Multiculturalism** through community events, advisory activities, and engagement across government, raising awareness for multicultural principles and inclusive practices.
- **Finalising and implementing the Council’s work plan**, aligning activities with legislative functions, stakeholder priorities, and community needs.
- **Hosting an annual community consultation event** to provide a structured opportunity for input from multicultural communities and to inform the Council’s advice to government.
- **Continuing to provide advice to government on emerging multicultural policy issues**, including cross-government initiatives, systemic barriers, and sector-specific challenges.

Appendix A – Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism Terms of Reference

Please find here, the MACM [Terms of Reference](#).



Appendix B – Charter for Multiculturalism

Please find here the [Multiculturalism Act 2023](#).

Schedule 1 Charter for multiculturalism

(see s 7)

The Legislative Assembly believes our community is enriched by the long and continuous cultures of the first peoples of Australia and the diverse cultures, languages, religious or spiritual beliefs of the many other people who have made our community their home. Accordingly, we say:

Regardless of your background and experiences, and how you have come to be in the ACT—

- 1 you are welcome and your contributions to our community are valued
- 2 you are free and safe to express, practise, maintain and celebrate your cultural, religious and spiritual identity
- 3 you are entitled to use, preserve and share your language
- 4 you are free to participate as equals in the civic, cultural, economic, educational, political and social life of the ACT
- 5 you are entitled to equitable access to information, services and programs provided to our community

We have a shared responsibility to—

- 6 value the contributions of all people, regardless of their backgrounds and experiences
- 7 embrace and realise the benefits that diversity brings to our civic, cultural, economic, educational, political and social life
- 8 create a harmonious and unified community based on mutual respect, trust and understanding
- 9 end racism and other forms of unlawful discrimination.