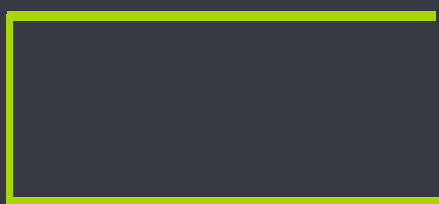


Australian National  
Internship Program



Enhancing civic participation  
amongst Australian  
multicultural communities

Ericha Hera Smyth



ACT

Enhancing civic participation amongst Australian multicultural communities

**Enhancing civic participation amongst Australian multicultural communities**

**Author:**

Ericha Hera Smyth

*Bachelor of International Relations*

Australian National University

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr Andrew Braddock for allowing me to participate in the internship and Deb Cleland, my research supervisor, who has been generous with her time throughout the research project. She has provided me constructive feedback and expanded my knowledge of the Australian multicultural space. Secondly, I would like to show appreciation to Dr Laurence Brown, the Director of the Australian National Internship Program (ANIP), and the ANIP team for facilitating the internship. Thirdly, I would like to express my gratitude to the leaders and spokespersons who participated in the interviews, which has been an integral part of guiding the report. Your stories have been incredibly insightful, and your actions are a testament to the efforts made by the multicultural community to make a change.

I would like to thank my father, Alan Smyth; my mother, Herawati; my aunt, Lorraine Sargeant, for providing continuous support during my time at the ANU. I would also like to thank Henry Zhang, Fiona Ballentine, Ferguson Smyth, and Ayah Sahib for helping me persevere.

## Executive Summary

Many studies have applauded Australia as a successful multicultural state. However, multicultural communities continue to face barriers to civic participation including, discrimination, limited accessibility to social networks and leadership opportunities. The report proposes that involving culturally, linguistically diverse communities in civic action can lead to greater social cohesion and a healthier democratic process. The Australian Capital Territory is a focal point for this report, highlighting that a localised approach is the best method to improve civic participation.

The report aims to create strategies that will strengthen civic participation among Canberra's multicultural communities. First, understanding the Australian multicultural landscape and how the Australian Capital Territory compares is integral in gaining insight into the civic space. This prompted the procurement of primary research through interviewing Canberra's multicultural leaders and spokespersons which, provided great perspectives into the efforts undertaken by grassroots agencies. These interviews proved valuable as academic literature surrounding civic participation in Canberra's multicultural space is severely limited. The data assisted in identifying barriers to civic participation in Canberra which included weak information pathways for Australia's social and political systems, followed by reduced access to support and leadership opportunities. The report sought a cross-comparison study with Bendigo to develop strategies in the development of a localised approach. Much of the additional research was drawn from academic literature, government reports, and news articles.

The main findings of this report reveal a communication dissonance between local government and multicultural communities in Canberra. Barriers to civic participation derive from disproportionate levels of engagement and limited government-endorsed support and opportunities. Endeavours to strengthen civic participation was undertaken by multicultural institutions, revealing that culturally diverse communities are interested in engaging with their respective neighbourhoods. This also reinforces the benefits of engaged citizenship and that including diverse communities can offer positive and unique contributions. In comparison, government efforts are lacklustre and often pliant to existing structures despite the dynamic quality of the multicultural space. As such, key recommendation to amend these shortfalls signals the requirement of local government to support existing and emerging communities to promote a sense of belonging. Further, the integration of effective systems of communication and information is significant in disseminating knowledge. Finally, efforts must be pushed by non-multicultural institutions to better understand the experiences of culturally diverse communities and reduce discrimination.

**Table of Contents**

Introduction ..... 6

Section 1: Context on the state of multiculturalism and civic participation in Australia ..... 8

    1.1 Australia ..... 8

    1.2 The Australian Capital Territory ..... 8

Section 2: ACT ..... 10

    2.1 Political security and approachability ..... 10

    2.2 Communication gap ..... 10

    2.3 Network-of-support, leadership opportunities ..... 11

Section 3: Cross-sectional Comparison – Victoria ..... 13

    3.1 Comparisons of local response to racism (reality of risks) ..... 13

    3.2 Response ..... 14

Recommendations ..... 16

Conclusion ..... 17

Appendices ..... 18

Bibliography ..... 22

## Introduction

The objective of this paper is to identify the challenges, analyse how active citizenship occurs, and create strategies that will strengthen civic participation amongst Australian multicultural communities in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). There is a lack of representation and civic engagement with people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Participation among multicultural communities is valuable not only for promoting a culture of inclusive engagement but offering unique contributions to the civic space.

This report will focus its examinations on civic participation and what it entails for CALD communities. 'Civic participation' in this paper will be drawn from National Settlement Outcomes Standards by the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) whereby communities, "are fully engaged and participating in the Australian community and exercising their individual and collective rights and responsibilities under the law," (2015, 11), and the discussion framed by their indicators (See Figure 1). While SCoA only covers newly arrived migrants and refugees five years after settlement, barriers to civic participation do not easily disappear and are intergenerational (SCoA 2018, 4-5). The analysis is drawn from reports from government institutions such as the Victorian Multicultural Commission, academic literature and news articles. To gain an insight into local actions to expand civic engagement, nine leaders and spokespersons from multicultural organisations in the ACT were interviewed. This is due to the fact that academic literature of Canberra's multicultural space is severely limited, thus, primary research had to be procured. Further, this report acknowledges that multiculturalism in Australia is a broad topic, however, it is not within the scope of this research to delve deep into such debates as the main focal point is civic participation.

The research will be structured as follows: (1) Context on the state of multiculturalism and civic participation in Australia, (2) A case study of the ACT that focuses on key informant interviews, (3) Cross-sectional comparison with Victoria, (4) Recommendations and conclusions.

**Figure 1**

<b>Settlement Council of Australia Indicators to Civic Participation</b>
Service providers assist newly arrived people to develop their knowledge and understanding of Australia's social and political systems, and reinforce knowledge of their rights and responsibilities
Newly arrived people are provided with information, pathways and support to develop their understanding of Australian values and to become Australian citizens
Newly arrived people contribute and give back to Australian society, for example through volunteering
Newly arrived individuals and communities are supported to share their own stories and opinions, to ensure that their voices help to shape Australia's civic and political landscape
Settlement services provide leadership training and development opportunities so that newly arrived individuals can become leaders in Australian society
Key sites of civic participation such as media, politics, and philanthropy reflect the cultural diversity of Australian society.

Source: Settlement Council of Australia, National Settlement Outcomes Standards, 2015.

## Section 1: Context on the state of multiculturalism and civic participation in Australia

### 1.1 Australia

Introduced to the government lexicon in the 1970s, multiculturalism marked Australia's pivot in attitudes towards immigration policies and by extension, transformed government approach toward culturally diverse communities (Koleth 2010). Initiatives towards multiculturalism began when the reformist Labor Government adopted the framework from Canada, and it was quickly endorsed as a bipartisan government policy in Australia (Dekker et al. 2017). The introduction of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* indicated the departure from the 'White Australia Policy', thus signalling the embrace towards the new demographic, social and cultural changes (Moran 2011). During this time, Australia spearheaded changes to advance citizen participation in electoral processes and promote minority rights by establishing a liberal-democratic system that allowed privileges such as the peaceful right to protest (Head 2011). Therefore, Australia's position towards multiculturalism has always been closely intertwined with civic participation.

A glance at parliament reveals that, despite government-led transformations, there are fundamental flaws to Australia's approach to civic participation and multiculturalism. A report from Leading for Change revealed that only 4% of Federal Members of Parliament had non-European ancestry in comparison to 19% of the Australian population (Soutphommasane 2018). Asian-Australians are noted to be incredibly under-represented in senior political positions despite 14.7% of Australian adults today being of Asian heritage (Biddle et al. 2019, 2). There is scholarship attributing the lack of political engagement with cultural relativism and unconscious biases (Johnson and Sy 2016). However, this lack of diversity proves to be problematic as it reveals the absence of government endorsement of genuine, diverse representation (Chiu 2021). This is egregious as it privileges decision-making only to a small sector of society. Despite governments recognising the cultural diversity in Australia's contemporary populace, it is not being translated into civic action. Enhanced civic participation from multicultural communities can bring a positive, unique contribution to the community. Therefore, governments need to formulate a structural framework that can codify Australia's democratic institutions and deliver on a democracy that is representative of all cultural backgrounds.

### 1.2 The Australian Capital Territory

According to the 2016 Census, 30.4% of people in Canberra had both parents born overseas (ABS 2016). Nearly 20% of people in the ACT indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home, the top common languages being Mandarin, Italian, Arabic, Cantonese, and Greek (ABS 2017). The diverse composition of Canberra's population raises the importance of multicultural civic engagement. 'Inclusion' is the integration of uniqueness and promoting feelings of belonging rather than conformity and assimilation to white practices (Shore et al. 2011). This means bringing forth a framework of inclusion



whereby communities retain their 'uniqueness' and are treated equally. Especially, for groups who have historically fewer opportunities and are faced with high rates of discrimination (Shore et al. 2011, 1277-1263). This is because of the potential value diversity holds and how it can enhance the democratic process that promotes proportional representation (ibid). Ultimately, the state of relatively high multiculturalism in Canberra is a reality and there are benefits in engaging with multicultural communities.

Canberra's multicultural landscape is composed of diverse actors, ranging from government bodies, non-government organisations (NGOs) and community groups. Within the hierarchy is the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA). The OMA coordinates a whole-of-government response by providing community support and oversees the allocation of multicultural grants (ACT Government 2021). Additional government-affiliated bodies include the ACT Multicultural Advisory Council, which allows CALD background individuals to adopt leadership roles and consult with the government (ACT Government 2021). There are independent peak bodies such as the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc. (CMCF) and community organisations including the Sri Lankan Community, East African Community Association of Canberra (EACA), among others that run voluntarily. Existing institutions such as the Multicultural Hub Canberra are substantially government-funded and offer services that support migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. This depicts a diverse set of interest groups with various capacities, visibility, and engagement. When approaching methods to enhance civic participation, governments must prioritise mutual investment, especially towards groups who are underrepresented in the civic space (Shore et al. 1279). Consequently, the current state of multiculturalism in Canberra is disproportionate and in need of recommendations.

## Section 2: ACT

### 2.1 Political security and approachability

Disproportionate levels of engagement in Canberra shows the lack of awareness and information pathways of Australia's social and political systems. One community leader raised that some communities associated politics with, "corruption, nepotism, thuggery, bribery, [and] anything you can think of negatively." Over the recent years, irrespective of cultural background, Australian public satisfaction towards political parties and key institutions has decreased (ANU 2019). Nevertheless, the interviews reveal that projection of Australian politics matters when engaging with multicultural communities. This also raises political security and risks involved when engaging with civic activities. Media is a major site for civic participation. In a country where politicians hold the power of deportation and racist rhetoric is abundant, it de-incentivises communities from engaging in civic participation especially when exposed to media hostility (Tyrberg 2020, 3214). Therefore, government institutions must cultivate an environment where the community can feel safe and are aware of their political rights. Here, building information pathways is imperative to creating reciprocal trust and raising awareness that it is safe to engage in civic action.

The ACT government has spearheaded initiatives to enhance civic participation amongst Canberra's multicultural communities. The focus is to develop an understanding of the system by disseminating information and engaging with CALD communities. Approaches are drawn from 'The ACT Multicultural Framework 2015-2020,' which focuses on three core strategies: (1) accessible services, (2) enhanced citizenship and social cohesion, (3) capitalising on the benefits of cultural diversity (ACT Government n.d.). However, the framework is currently out of date and requires the formulation of an updated version that reflects recent events and concerns such as the implication wrought by COVID-19 in the multicultural space. Nevertheless, the strategy aims to provide information and enhance social cohesion by facilitating pathways such as public forums, youth engagement, the inclusion of women and consulting with multicultural peak bodies. Further action includes the Capital Culture Discussion Paper which was circulated to stakeholders across the ACT, and the ACT Multicultural Summit (ACT Government n.d.). Approachability and accessibility are integral when engaging with the community and local governments must take the initiative to extend assistance (Cheyne and Tawhai 2007, 43). This will create reciprocity and simultaneously project local leadership in a positive manner that will foster awareness of local decision-making (ibid).

### 2.2 Communication gap

Despite local government efforts in promoting information, a communication gap persists. Community leaders expressed concerns on how there is "no access to the information on the processes of civic participation." This once again raises the discussion of disproportionality when engaging with multicultural communities. Some CALD organisations have been in Australia for many decades, while

some communities that have recently arrived may not have an available support network. Therefore, accessing information may be incredibly difficult. Institutions must provide information pathways and create ecosystems of knowledge with emerging multicultural communities and not be complacent with existing ones. Inclusive practices to enhance social cohesions include access to information, participation in decision-making and communication facilitation (Shore et al. 2011, 1278). As such, seeking active engagement must also have effective communication strategies and available information networks for communities to access.

Efforts in the ACT have been undertaken by local agencies. For example, a representative from the Multicultural Advisory Council noted that they rely on newsletters and the membership database to spread information. Similarly, the CMCF spreads communication via social media and community delegates. A respondent noted that to achieve participation, local government needs to link with “grassroots organisations that have the right connections.” This reveals the significant efforts initiated by local actors to fill in communication gaps between the government and communities. However, it is critical to acknowledge that the majority of these organisations are run voluntarily. Consultation with peak bodies is fundamental in enhancing civic participation and the government must support CALD organisations to reinforce knowledge (Kymlicka 2003, 161). Formal institutions must actively engage with emerging multicultural communities and build on existing information systems. Therefore, this showcases the contribution of CALD institutions in ensuring that information and knowledge are effectively disseminated into the community.

### 2.3 Network-of-support, leadership opportunities

Understanding intersectional concerns and perspectives are significant when engaging with civic multiculturalism. A respondent noted the additional anxieties experienced by CALD women throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns in Australia and how women are, “juggling work, home-schooling, [and] work upscaling.” This highlights how many members of CALD groups are concerned with access to education and employment opportunities rather than politics that centre on cultural and ethnic identity (Ghosh 2018, 21). For that matter, this also brings forth a gendered perspective on civic participation and the challenges CALD women face within society. On the other hand, interviewees have responded that CALD communities are interested in engaging in civic action. A representative of the multicultural community expressed that, “there are lots of women who want to engage in politics. But it's not known for women of colour on how to get into politics.” This shows how it is significant to develop support networks to cultivate civic participation. Especially, as employment barriers can limit multicultural communities from participating in community gatherings (SCoA 2018). Newly arrived communities will prioritise establishing a livelihood rather than engaging in civic participation. Therefore, securing employment can empower migrant communities to participate in the civic space.

Bodies such as Multicultural Hub Canberra have endeavoured to support civic participation amongst CALD communities by providing services to foster support ranging from youth and employment

services to settlement and women services. A spokesperson stated that the organisation was, “very client-focused and community-focused. And so we will always do what we think is the most appropriate thing for our clients.” Targeted services such as the ‘Multicultural Women’s Service’ is beneficial to enhancing civic multiculturalism as it provides programs including community development, women forums and community events, among others (Multicultural Hub Canberra n.d.). Services such as this create development opportunities that enhance feelings of belonging and encourage people to participate in the local community. If sections of the community are feeling supported then this would promote inclusion and contribute to further civic engagement (Shore et al. 2011, 1280). Especially during a time of uncertainty across the community or in an individual’s life. Feeling supported can reduce anxieties and tighten community interaction which would then lead to greater civic engagement. In the long term, this benefits the wider community as it promotes inclusion and raises the opportunity for unique contributions to be made in the Canberra landscape. Ultimately, this reveals the importance of local agencies in the discussion of advancing civic engagement.

Community driven approaches initiated by NGOs to support and advocate for multicultural communities continue to be of great importance. This can be witnessed through activities undertaken by the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc. by the organization's Community Development Program. The leader of the organisation states that, “we’ve targeted a community group that we identify as in need of support, to help them to build the community organization, and to develop their needs leadership and management skills in managing the organization. Also, we support community organizations who are running different activities in support of their cause.” This reinforces the importance of peak bodies in peer learning and developing methods to support Canberra’s multicultural community. The provision of pathways to educate communities about civic responsibilities is critical in promoting local engagement. Moreover, the efforts put forth by the CMCF shows that the multicultural space in Canberra is committed to expanding civic engagement among CALD background individuals. Therefore, by offering leadership opportunities, training, and workshops, barriers to civic participation can be reduced.

### Section 3: Cross-sectional Comparison – Victoria

Observing government response to racist incidents can provide valuable strategies to strengthen social cohesion and promote inclusivity. This section examines the response of two examples of explicit racism, one in the ACT and one in Victoria.

#### 3.1 Comparisons of local response to racism (reality of risks)

Whilst Canberra is culturally diverse, the anxieties of guaranteed security when engaging with civic action and political engagement is still of concern. As a result of the pandemic, discrimination against Asian-Australians is increasing (ANU 2020). In Canberra, multicultural leaders expressed that, “verbal racial abuse had spiked during the lockdown,” and that communities do not know where to turn to in response to the aggression (Fuller Canberra Weekly 2021). This also comes after a targeted racist attack in Canberra when a cafe owner faced racial slurs, its content circulated through social media (Evlin SBS News 2021). However, local government response to this attack has been lacklustre. Instead, action was immediately taken to the federal space where Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan signalled the need for a national anti-racism strategy (ibid). Whilst this is appreciable, action in response to community racism must be taken at a local level. Especially, when such concerns impact social cohesion and civic participation. Overall, Canberra prides itself on being one of Australia’s diverse communities, but discrimination and prejudice still simmers above the surface. This can de-incentivise CALD communities from engaging in civic action when safety is not guaranteed.

An extreme example of attitudes that threatened the security of multicultural communities is exemplified in a Victorian case study. Between 2014 to 2016, 1,000 people demonstrated against a proposal to build a mosque in Bendigo, a significant proportion travelled to the city from regions of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia (Morris ABC News 2015). The protest was organised via social media by a nationalist group called United Patriots Front (UPF) (ibid). This indicates the level of threat to political security in the spheres of the Australian domestic setting. Such actions inevitably hold a significant impact on civic participation. A study has shown that stigmatisation has dissuaded Muslim mothers’ from engaging with school-related volunteering (Peucker 2021, 26). Moreover, rhetoric that demonise ‘refugees’ and asylum seekers as threats to national security can significantly impact multicultural communities (Jayasuriya 2002). Media circulating sentiments of Islamophobia will reinforce barriers to social mobility and socio-economic resources. Aggression will also discourage communities from engaging with civic action. The case in Victoria is valuable to understand why threats to political security is a valid concern and that governments should construct an anti-racist strategy.

### 3.2 Response

The local Bendigo City Council responded through a series of action items. With the ‘Racism. It Stops With Me Campaign,’ the city council approached individuals and local businesses to make a pledge to stand up to racism with the hashtag **#itstopswithmebendigo** (Australian Human Rights Commission n.d.). Further activities were adopted by the local community through counter-protests and community-based actions in response to the anti-Islam sentiment (Rudner 2017, 6-7). In collaboration with the city council, local anti-racism and multicultural groups fostered activities to strengthen the history and understanding of Australia’s cultural diversity (ibid). In comparison to Canberra, networks of information and communication in Bendigo is stronger. This can be attributed to the strong local networks comprised of Council, business and community (ibid). Whilst the risk of Canberra dissenting into anti-mosque protests is unlikely in the near future, local government response in Bendigo demonstrates the importance of cross-community dialogue. Especially, in the realm of communication where a safe space can be fostered in order for individuals to be confident in expressing themselves and be a part of the community.

Strategies have been issued to enhance civic participation amongst diverse communities in the aftermath of the rally. There is an emphasis on training to develop opportunities such as leadership and media training among multicultural groups (Rudner 2017, 101). This is done to empower CALD communities. However, it is also important to raise that there are groups outside of the multicultural community who are receiving training as well. A positive outcome in the aftermath of the rally is that there is a stronger connection between the police and the Muslim community, whereby local training has been facilitated for local officers to understand Islam (Rudner 2017, 73). A similar comparison can be drawn from the ACT police working closely with the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services to ensure the community’s wellbeing (AFP n.d.). This reinforces that pursuit towards civic participation must see white institutions undertaking training to understand and appreciate that multiculturalism needs to be maintained. Canberra has the privilege to claim that it is multiculturally diverse. Yet, the absence to prevent microaggression and discrimination towards racism can create further dissatisfaction among CALD communities. The local government needs to put in the effort to facilitate training in all sectors to respond to racism so that a sense of belonging can be fostered.

The protests held repercussions across the Bendigo community but support from civil societies helped re-establish a space of inclusion. The impact of discrimination varied; some lacked the confidence to remain in Bendigo, while others thought about moving but decided to stay (Markus 2018). Civil societies such as ‘Believe in Bendigo’ were created by local community figures in response to the 2015 protests and were driven by the commitment to provide a ‘safe space’ for the multicultural community in Bendigo (Peucker et al. 2020, 13). ‘Believe in Bendigo’ grew rapidly and gained support from the community and local businesses. This led to sustained changes and improved inter-community relations. The efforts undertaken by the civil society created a sense of safety and belonging which increased levels of civil-political engagement (ibid). The diversity network established by ‘Believe in Bendigo’ worked with multi-

## Enhancing civic participation amongst Australian multicultural communities

stakeholders to create preventative strategies for racism in the community. Fundamentally, 'Believe in Bendigo' nurtures a site for communities to share their stories and opinions in a way that shapes the civic landscape.

## Recommendations

This research report suggests that the ACT government should enhance civic participation through the following recommendations:

### **Facilitate forums, workshop and skills development training opportunities**

The ACT government should facilitate programs that expand spaces for discussion and enhance skills development training for multicultural communities. Regular forums can become a platform for CALD communities to express concerns and share experiences. Furthermore, political leaders must engage in the forums to strengthen the relationship between government and community and consolidate reciprocity. Civic participation can also be achieved by holding workshops and skills development training programs that promote civic education and how to access government services such as grant application processes. Additionally, in pursuing these programs, it is fundamental to collaborate with local networks and agencies. Overall, having government-supported programs will provide opportunities and enhance community relations.

### **Integrating effective systems of information**

Communication is integral to strengthen the dissemination of knowledge and access to information. Here, reaching out to the community in-person and utilising the digital space is vital. Indeed, there are existing roundtables, but this needs to be proliferated and accessible to emerging CALD communities. Moreover, the roundtables must be run outside of working hours as most organisations run voluntarily. Additionally, it is imperative to develop a clear set of guidelines on rights and responsibilities. Information on civic participation can be disseminated to the community via social media, local radios and letter drops. Ultimately, the ACT government must bridge the relationship and communication gap with the multicultural community.

### **Develop an Anti-Racism strategy**

The ACT government must devise a plan to implement an anti-racism strategy. This can be adopted in the form of a campaign, drawing upon the frameworks initiated by the Bendigo City Council which emphasises the importance of a localised approach and cross-institutional collaboration. Best practices lie in training non-multicultural institutions to develop a cultural module and facilitate methods to promote interactive social learning among the community. Efforts to understand the experiences of the multicultural space must be undertaken by non-CALD institutions. As such, it is significant for the ACT government to imbed social learning and develop constructive avenues to reduce discrimination.



## Conclusion

The report has drawn the conclusion that the majority of the efforts undertaken to reduce barriers are enacted by multicultural institutions. There is a dissonance between local government and the multicultural community in Canberra. The remarkable actions committed by community organisations suggest that CALD communities are ready to engage. Yet, limited support and lack of opportunities make it difficult for social inclusion to actually occur. One respondent noted their concerns and stated that the local government should provide opportunities for, “the upcoming generation in areas of community organisation.” This highlights the notion that CALD people need to be given the opportunity to engage.

The Victorian cross-comparison provides insights on how to improve civic participation in Canberra. First, strengthening local networks is critical to foster intra-community dialogue. Second, reciprocal efforts must be undertaken by non-multicultural communities. Moreover, incidents of microaggression such as the targeted cafe attack show that discrimination exist in Canberra. Thus, the community must be prepared on how to respond to such incidents. Third, Bendigo shows that civil societies matter and that a bottom-up form of activism is essential in advocating for rights and democracy.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Toolkit to Enhance Civic Participation

Tool Kit to Enhance Civic Participation	
Issue	Action
Support, Development and Training Opportunities	<p><b>Annual Community Forums:</b> Hold a forum once a year, inviting all the committee members/presidents of the various organisations. Local government can provide information regarding opportunities for grants, community spaces that can be used and areas of concern linked to the community. This will nurture a space where multicultural leaders can express their concerns. This will provide the opportunity to enhance transparency and create accountability. The forums can be framed around a certain theme to provide direction for discussion.</p> <p><b>Bi-annual Leadership Workshops:</b> Enhance leadership opportunities by holding bi-annual workshops for emerging and recently arrived leaders interested in political and civic engagement. Introduce mentors or other multicultural leaders as guest speakers to share stories of experiences and showcase space for opportunity. Workshops should be focused on honing technical skills such as grant applications, how to respond to scenarios, public speaking, skills development, media training communication skills. Potential workshops can be divided into different age ranges.</p> <p><b>Schools Visits:</b> Hold visits to promote civic education and benefits of multiculturalism across sites of education including schools, youth centres, vocational training centres, among others. Politicians should be the ones presenting this information and it should be projected in an approachable manner that takes place in an informal setting.</p> <p><b>Multicultural Youth:</b> Create opportunities for multicultural youth in Canberra by facilitating programs through pathways such as volunteering and internships. As it is centred towards youth, create age criteria below the age of twenty-five. Depending on the program, perhaps inquire to each community to nominate one of their future leaders. This will generate the opportunity for youth of CALD backgrounds and provide them experiences and training in the civic space. This will sow seeds for future community leaders and establish a relationship that will strengthen networks.</p> <p><b>Youth Organisations:</b> Approach university cultural organisations as they often have an established community network, especially among Canberra youth. Potentially seek to hold a collaborative event discussing relevant topics such as democracy in Australia, or diaspora engagement, opportunities for international students, career opportunities among others. Consider who would be the most appropriate guest speaker, whether it is a politician or policy advisor. University societies often facilitate public seminars; therefore this would be a beneficial opportunity for both parties.</p>

	<p><b>Pipeline of Opportunities (CALD Women):</b> Establish a pipeline of opportunities for CALD women whether through employment, leadership pathways, wellbeing and support. This highlights the importance of acknowledging the concerns experienced by women of a culturally diverse background. Facilitating events, forums, and workshops targeted towards women will create and enhance a community network. By providing services and advocating, women in the community will feel a sense of belonging.</p> <p><b>Collaboration:</b> Formulate discussion in a dialogue setting where each party can speak and the atmosphere is welcoming. Instead of holding such discussion in a formal setting, potentially look towards community spaces that are informal such as parks, cafes, libraries, among others. This will strengthen the feelings of belonging and encourage individuals to share stories and express concerns. Have politicians attend to humanise politics which will convey their efforts to reach out to the community.</p>
Communication	<p><b>Network-of-knowledge:</b> From the digital perspective, the local government can create a database of contacts. Leveraging this information, the government should email community organisations monthly with information pertaining to relevant contacts, who to go to for health, grants, electoral information, etc. Alternatively, dropping mail containing such information can also be effective in spreading information and knowledge to neighbourhoods. Further outreach can be taken in the form of sending letters to sites where people congregate such as community language schools, mosques, temples, among others. Have advertisement on social media, local news and bulletin boards on community events.</p> <p><b>Stalls in Public Spaces:</b> Have stalls in public spaces such as shopping centres, near tram/rail stops, religious centres, etc. Hand out pamphlets/digital pamphlets by scanning a QR code, that contains information on the rights and responsibilities of an individuals.</p> <p><b>Guidelines on Rights and Responsibilities:</b> Develop a clear set of guidelines for the public with regard to their rights and responsibilities for engaging with the organisation, and ensure these are available publicly through media, social media, letter drops, local radio.</p> <p><b>Local Media:</b> Give media opportunities to CALD organisations to advocate for themselves and showcase positive occurrences that are happening in the community. Provide organisations a platform for them to speak on behalf of the topic that they are passionate in. By sharing stories from CALD individuals themselves (something about representation).</p> <p><b>Roundtables:</b> Construct roundtables surrounding a specific topic, have a report formulated in response to areas of concern in the community. Promote intercultural dialogue between the government and multicultural leaders. Have political representatives engage in roundtable discussions. It is important to take into consideration the</p>

	<p>holding of roundtables outside of working hours as many NGOs are run on a voluntary basis.</p> <p><b>Digital Portal:</b> The utilisation of technology can open opportunities that can foster a digital space. Creating a digital portal specifically catered to promoting grants, opportunities, and workshops may enable effortless access to information and promote awareness. The responsibility of this portal can be moderated by the OMA or a multicultural peak body. Unlike social media where there is a proliferation of information and control of such information is often unmoderated, this portal will be tailored to the needs of multicultural organisations.</p>
<p>Anti-Racism Campaign/Strategy</p>	<p><b>Anti-Racism Strategy/Campaign:</b> This recommendation addresses how the community should respond to racism. It requires government to show a remarkable amount of effort to campaign against racism and promote rights and responsibility to the community. Must be in collaboration with grass-roots agency and take on a bottom-up structure.</p> <p><b>Training non-multicultural institutions to develop a cultural plan and training module:</b> Prompt non-CALD background individuals to think about culture and identities and for institutions to understand that Australia has a diverse history. It will also encourage the wider community to understand the experiences of the multicultural space. This recommendation will require the local government to reach out to individuals in leadership positions such as CEOs, principals, priests, to formulate an appropriate training module. The opinions from multicultural organisations themselves would also be highly recommended.</p> <p><b>Interactive Social Learning:</b> The promotion of social learning through school talks is essential to develop constructive pathways to minimise bias and discrimination. Embedding civic education and enhancing knowledge of multiculturalism among Canberra’s youth will encourage a new generation of leaders to understand the opportunities available when engaging with civic action. Indeed, this recommendation requires an interactive element to leave a long-lasting impression on the audience.</p>

**Appendix 2 – Interview questions for multicultural leaders and spokespersons**

1. What does your organisation do?
2. What is your role in the organisation?
3. How do you interact with the local government in the ACT?
4. Do you know who your local members are, and which ministers are delivering policy and programs in your areas of work?
5. Please describe how you think the people who interact with your organisation engage with politicians, political processes and the democracy outside formal elections?
6. Have you (your organisation) developed ways to facilitate civic participation amongst other underrepresented groups in the community?

## Enhancing civic participation amongst Australian multicultural communities

7. What do you see as the main barriers to participating in local governance for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities?
8. Do you think civic participation is important? Why or why not?
9. Do you believe that the local government has made an effort in engaging with your community?
10. How can the local government support culturally and linguistically diverse communities to strengthen their participation in local governance?
11. Are there areas of significant concern where you (your organisation) believe that the local government should improve?
12. Could you please rank the following areas of concern from most to least important:
  - Economy
  - COVID-19
  - Climate change
  - Discrimination
  - Integration
13. Is there anything that your local government does to engage culturally and linguistically diverse communities? For example, have you received COVID-19 information in languages other than English?
14. What do you think could be done to improve engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities?

**Bibliography and sources redacted for confidentiality. Available on request to braddock at [parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:parliament.act.gov.au)**