

Submission to The Office of Multicultural Interests: WA Multicultural Act

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia - Multicultural Youth
Advocacy Network WA

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youth affairs council
of western australia

About the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network WA (MYAN WA)

MYAN WA is a network of youth, settlement and adjacent sector workers, community members, and young people. The network aims to build the capacity of WA practitioners, service providers, policy makers, and funding bodies to ensure young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds reach their full potential. MYAN WA is hosted by the Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA). YACWA is the peak non-government youth organisation in Western Australia, that works to address the exclusion of young people in a rapidly changing society.

As MYAN WA is currently unfunded, the submission has been developed by YACWA, supported by former MYAN WA staff.

This submission was co-authored by Yurika Nur Oktaviana, Katie Russell, Katie Berry, and Alicia Keenan.

For inquiries contact yacwa@yacwa.org.au

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, their continuing connection to land, sea, and sky, their enrichment of community and dedication to storytelling. YACWA are based in Boorloo, on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.

Executive Summary

This submission responds directly to the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI)'s discussion paper, particularly the guiding principles, definitions, public sector accountability, advisory structures, and the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People.

Multicultural young people experience intersecting challenges that require a coordinated, whole-of-government response. Young people from multicultural and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds have unique lived experiences. They face distinct challenges in achieving equity, which current policy frameworks do not consistently address.

While Western Australia (WA) has policies promoting multicultural objectives, the absence of legislative foundations limits consistency and accountability, highlighting the need for stronger structural protections. Accordingly, systemic reforms are required to enshrine respect for multiculturalism across government institutions and community services so that WA is a place that everyone can call home. Thus, MYAN WA and YACWA strongly support the establishment of a Multicultural Act in Western Australia ('the Act' or 'an Act'). In this submission, MYAN WA and YACWA highlight the importance of a comprehensive and contemporary multicultural framework for the Act.

The Act needs to go beyond symbolism, by outlining meaningful commitments and practical, measurable outcomes. It also emphasises the need for structured, continuous engagement with young people, so their lived experiences directly inform policy design, implementation, and evaluation.

Recommendations

We recommend that the WA Multicultural Act:

1. Mandates the involvement of multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at all stages of development, implementation, and review of the Act.
2. Commits to meaningful engagement with multicultural young people and their communities, including committing sustainable funding to MYAN WA to facilitate and support a multicultural Youth Reference Group.
3. Recognises and protects multilingual access to government services.
4. Guarantees access to interpreters, translators and communication assistance across all government services and agencies.
5. Requires the provision of targeted, culturally inclusive educational approaches to parent, carer, and student engagement across the education system.
6. Requires education institutions to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity through curriculum content and language education.
7. Requires government employment and economic development strategies to implement specific targets for multicultural young people and their communities.
8. Establishes a statutory framework to embed multicultural equity across public services.
9. Requires targeted recruitment and retention of multicultural workers across government agencies and institutions.
10. Mandates investment for community-led organisations to act as cultural brokers between government and multicultural communities.
11. Mandates cultural safety standards and workplace protocols and training across government agencies.
12. Formally recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia.
13. Embeds Indigenous language and cultural learning into the WA school curriculum.

Introduction

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Western Australia (MYAN WA) and the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) are pleased to present this submission which highlights the voices, experiences, and expertise of young people across Western Australia for inclusion in the WA Multicultural Act.

We draw on extensive experience working with individuals aged 12-25 from refugee and migrant backgrounds, as well as insights from their communities and the broader youth and multicultural sectors across the state. This submission is further informed by comprehensive survey responses, capturing the perspectives of young people who stand to be significantly impacted by the proposed legislative changes.

This submission highlights the importance of a comprehensive and contemporary multicultural framework for WA, which must include our key recommendations to ensure the Act contributes to an inclusive and equitable society. The Act must be a legislative foundation that goes beyond symbolic gestures to deliver tangible, measurable outcomes. We advocate for embedding multicultural equity duties into legislation, fostering a coordinated whole-of-government approach to prevent discrimination and promote inclusion, and ensuring culturally safe service standards across all sectors.

Furthermore, it underscores the significance of involving young people from multicultural backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in decision-making processes to reflect their lived experiences and insights in policy development.

We outline practical recommendations designed to guide policy development towards a more effective, equitable, and inclusive migration framework. These aim to ensure that multicultural young people can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the social and economic fabric of Western Australia.

Please note that while we frequently refer to multicultural young people, we recognise the broad reaching implications of this Act. The Act impacts a diverse range of young individuals, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, those who identify as

culturally and linguistically diverse, and any other young person potentially affected by this legislation.

In addition to the experiences of multicultural young people, we have made a conscious and well considered decision to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this submission for the Act. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples often experience inequalities and injustices that align with those experienced by those from multicultural backgrounds. We also recognise the diversity and nuance of their cultures, traditions, ontologies, and languages.

Background

Western Australia is a symphony of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and religions. WA is home to people from over 220 different birthplaces, speaking more than 249 languages and dialects.¹ This diversity enriches WA's social, economic, and cultural composition, yet WA does not have a dedicated Multicultural Act.

While 85% of Australians recognise multiculturalism as a positive for the nation,² ethnocentric and culturally unresponsive policies have reinforced systemic barriers for many young people from multicultural backgrounds. These barriers lead to discrimination and inequality, exacerbated by the rise of racist and xenophobic narratives that threaten social cohesion and unity in our communities. Addressing these pressing challenges requires an urgent, strategic, and meaningful response.

¹ Office of Multicultural Interest, (2021), Census 2021 Highlights: *Western Australia's Changing Population and Cultural Diversity*, [https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/statistics/022434omi-census-highlight-report-feb23---web-ready-3-\(1\).pdf?sfvrsn=d87eb1ef_0](https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/statistics/022434omi-census-highlight-report-feb23---web-ready-3-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=d87eb1ef_0)

² O'Donnell, J., Guan, Q., & Prentice, (2024). *Mapping Social Cohesion*. <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Mapping-Social-Cohesion-2024-Report.pdf>

The Need for a Multicultural Act in Western Australia

Ineffectiveness of existing policies and legislation

“Australia is multicultural country that is diverse [with] all nations. We need more awareness in this society”- Young Person (Aged 18)

WA’s multiculturalism strengthens our social cohesion and economic growth, however underlying challenges for multicultural people continue to limit equitable access to services and opportunities. The state government must take a more strategic approach to identify and overcome systemic equity and inclusion barriers that hinder these young people from fully participating in socio-economic opportunities.

Despite its rich cultural diversity, WA lacks dedicated multicultural legislation, relying on policy instruments that lack binding authority and do not sufficiently address community need. Establishing a Multicultural Act in WA would align with legislation from other jurisdictions, as they have embedded multicultural principles through legislation (see *Table 1*). These jurisdictions have enhanced their promotion and protection of multiculturalism by establishing legally binding, long-term obligations to respect this diversity.

Table 1. Examples of Multicultural Legislation from Australian Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Act	Objectives and Inclusions
Victoria (VIC)	<i>Multicultural Act 2011</i>	The Act is formally embedded in Victorian law
New South Wales (NSW)	<i>Multicultural Act 2000</i>	The Act helps promotes equal rights and equitable access to government services

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	<i>Multiculturalism Act 2023</i>	Effective since 2024, ³ this legislation promotes multiculturalism in the territory
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“[A Multicultural Act] would enhance community in WA and provide another way for diverse individuals to feel safe in Australia”- Young Person (Aged 17)

While the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) has made strides in fostering culturally inclusive communities, multicultural young people continue to face significant economic and social barriers. The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network’s (MYAN) National Policy Alliance has identified several critical focus areas that need attention:

1. Discrimination in educational environments and pathways;
2. Intergenerational conflict and family violence;
3. Youth settlement in regional and metropolitan areas;
4. Mental health and wellbeing;
5. Employment and economic growth; and,
6. Opportunities for youth leadership.⁴

These focus areas highlight the urgency of systemic reform to ensure WA is inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to everyone.

Core Elements of a WA Multicultural Act

“I want the WA Multicultural Act to go beyond symbolism and focus on real, measurable change. That means embedding accountability,

³ ACT Government, (2023), *Multiculturalism Act 2023*, <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2023-3/>

⁴ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (2025). *Launch of the MYAN National Policy Alliance*. https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/MYAN_Report25_Digital.pdf

funding, and community-led decision-making into the Act, not just statements of intent.” -Young Person (Aged 18)

This section addresses the discussion paper’s questions on guiding principles, definitions, and the role of legislation in embedding multiculturalism across government.

YACWA surveyed young people about their thoughts on a WA Multicultural Act to determine how it can best represent the interests of multicultural young people. This included feedback on guiding principles, defining key terms relating to multiculturalism, establishing an independent advisory body, and implementing legislation on the public sector’s responsibilities. In total, 64 young people were surveyed through Survey Monkey, revealing strong support for the Act amongst young people.

The data collected represents a diverse cohort of young people, collecting insights from a broad range of intersecting identities:

- 45% of respondents identified as CaLD.
- Two thirds of respondents were below the age of 18.
- A third of respondents were young people in regional communities,⁵ with a high proportion from Southwest WA.
- A significant percentage of respondents identified as LGBTQIA+ (26.8%), neurodivergent (25.6%), or living with a disability and/or chronic illness (14.6%).

Of those surveyed, 74% of all respondents endorsed the idea of the Act. Support for the Act was higher amongst those who identified as CaLD, with 80% in favour of it. These findings underscore a strong desire among young people for legislative measures that promote multiculturalism.

1. Definitions

Defining key concepts is essential for establishing shared understanding of others’ identities and experiences. Existing legislation, such as the *Multicultural Victoria Act*

⁵ It is important to note that a significant portion of respondents were from the South West region, specifically around Margaret River area, which may have impacted survey results.

2011 (VIC) and the *Multiculturalism Act 2023* (ACT), explicitly define key terms like ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism’ in legislation. Young people prioritised defining such terms as ‘multiculturalism,’ ‘equality,’ ‘cultural responsiveness,’ and ‘social cohesion.’

Respondents expressed that defining these terms in legislation was important, as official terminology used in WA may not be widely understood outside of government contexts. This can particularly impact those from linguistically diverse backgrounds, as translating complex and abstract terms may be difficult if English is not their first language. It is essential the Act defines these terms and communicates them in a simple and comprehensible way. Use of alternative forms of media - images or visual guides - would increase engagement and understanding of the Act.

“The Act could make these words easier to understand by giving short, simple definitions and using examples young people can relate to, like school or community situations. It could also include pictures, videos, or interactive guides so young people can see what the words mean in real life.” -Young Person (Aged 13)

Respondents expressed that terminology must enable them to express and accurately represent their identities. Some young people do not resonate with the term CaLD, and do not believe they should be considered ‘diverse.’ The Diversity Council of Australia explains that the term ‘diverse’ is insufficient in capturing the experiences of multicultural people⁶. There was interest in emerging terms such as ‘culturally and racially marginalised’ (CARM), which may better capture the unequal experiences of marginalisation within communities.

“Many people who are CaLD may not even identify as CaLD, as it’s not a term widely used outside of government organisations. Having an additional term could be useful.”- Young Person (Aged 22)

⁶ Diversity Council Australia, (2023). *Words at Work: Should we use CALD or CARM.* [Words at Work: Should we use CALD or CARM? - Diversity Council Australia](#)

Recommendations

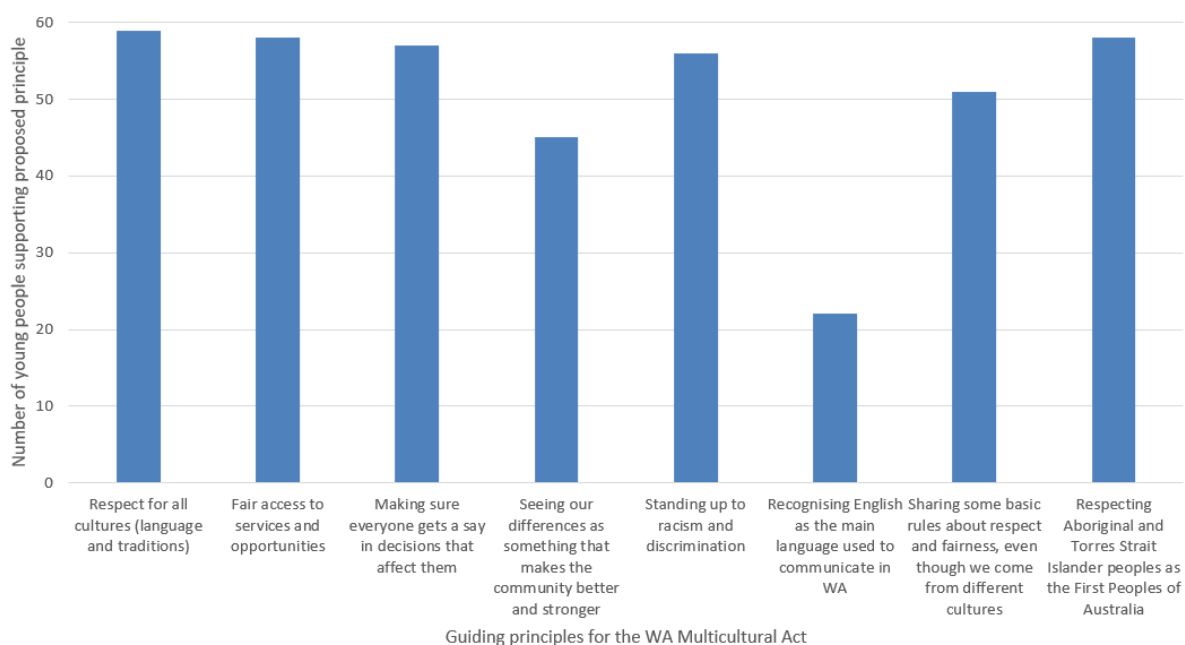
We recommend that the Act:

1. Mandates the involvement of multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at all stages of development, implementation, and review of the Act.
2. Commits to meaningful engagement with multicultural young people and their communities, including committing sustainable funding to MYAN WA to facilitate and support a multicultural Youth Reference Group.

2. Guiding Principles

The implementation of guiding principles is crucial to establish the Act's purpose and clarify its direction in creating change. The young people surveyed favoured a variety of principles (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1. Young People's Responses to 'What principles and values do you think should be protected by law and included in a Multicultural Act?'



Those young people who identified as CaLD or multicultural showed a difference in responses when compared to the total group surveyed, as outlined below:

- ‘Respect for all cultures’ and ‘respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia’ were deemed as some of the most important principles for both groups.
- Multicultural young people felt that ‘making sure everyone gets a say in decisions that affect them’ was equally as important. This emphasises the pertinence of including multicultural young people in the creation and implementation of the Act, discussed further in Section 4. They favoured principles, which was not reflected in the overall dataset.
- Principles of ‘standing up to racism and discrimination,’ ‘sharing some basic rules about respect and fairness, even though we come from different cultures,’ and ‘seeing our differences as something that makes the community better and stronger’ were favoured by multicultural young people.

This emphasises the importance of multicultural young people’s inclusion in the creation and implementation of the Act, discussed further in Section 5. Below the principles that were highlighted as most important for multicultural young people are outlined in more detail.

2.1 Recognising English as the common language

Respect for cultures, languages, traditions, and spiritual identities, was important for many young people, as they recognised these as essential for the inherent dignity of multicultural communities.⁷ Young people expressed that the recognition of English as the common language used in WA directly opposed the value and respect of diversity, receiving mixed written feedback from respondents (as shown below) and proving to be the least popular guiding principle.

“Recognising English as the main language used to communicate in WA is a bad idea. There are a lot of people that CANNOT use English [...] it's imperative to recognise English as only ONE of the languages used to communicate in WA.” -Young person (Aged 13)

⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2001). *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/universal-declaration-cultural-diversity>

“I support recognising English as the main language of WA and setting ground rules for societal respect and fairness.” -Young Person (Aged 19)

In 2021, almost a quarter of Australians spoke a language other than English at home.⁸ Recognising English as the common language diminishes the language rights of linguistically diverse people, establishing communication barriers that skew individuals’ access to supports and participation in day-to-day life.⁹

Instead, respondents want the state government to embrace multilingualism and uphold the institutional and legal protections of those from multicultural backgrounds. 76% of respondents believed that government agencies and services should be legally obliged to provide translators and interpreters upon request, to support multicultural people.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Act:

3. Recognises and protects multilingual access to government services.
4. Guarantees access to interpreters, translators and communication assistance across all government services and agencies.

2.2 Fair access to services and opportunities

Multicultural young people engage with a variety of services, institutions, and opportunities in their day-to-day lives. Young people expressed that these services are essential for their engagement with education, their transition into employment, and other aspects of this life stage.

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (2021). *Chronic health conditions among culturally and linguistically diverse Australian*. [Chronic health conditions among culturally and linguistically diverse Australians, 2021, Background - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

⁹ Frank, A. (2025). The Intersection of Language Policy and Immigration Law. *Newport International Journal of Research in Education*, 5(2), 52-57. <https://doi.org/10.59298/NIJRE/2025/525257>

Education

“Education and understanding are important values. I think kindness, openness, and making people feel welcomed when they move to a new community are also really important.” -Young Person (Aged 13)

Multicultural students are incredibly ambitious and motivated in pursuing education, which is crucial for their future opportunities, transitions to higher education and employment, and their well-being.¹⁰ However, they continue to face barriers in their educational journeys, including discrimination and bullying in schools, and a lack of accessible or appropriate learning resources.¹¹ Young people reported that these barriers make transitioning between educational institutions - such from Intensive English Centres (IEC) into mainstream schooling - especially challenging. Research reinforces this, highlighting that approximately one in four multicultural children experience challenges in at least one developmental domain, causing compounding difficulties during school transitions.¹²

“[We need] more language-learning in schools. Carers [need] to be recognised in schools, including young people that are heavily relied upon to provide interpretive services for their families - giving them extra time and support either in school or in community.”- Young Person (Aged 25)

Multicultural young people need additional tailored support. MYAN National has suggested targeted approaches to parent, carer, and student engagement by

¹⁰ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, (2023). *Shaping the future of Australian multiculturalism: realizing potential through multicultural youth participation*. https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2023_MYAN-Response-to-Multicultural-Framework-Review.pdf

¹¹ Office of Multicultural Interests. (2009). *Not Drowning, Waving: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Young People at Risk in Western Australia*. Government of Western Australia. https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/reports-orations-and-seminars/not-drowning-waving-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-cald-young-people-in-western-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=e1f06124_2

¹² Atalell, K.A., Pereira, G., Duko, B. *et al.* Developmental vulnerability in children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Western Australia: a population-based study. *World J Pediatr* **21**, 744–754 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12519-025-00936-0>

providing resources and the employment of multicultural workers in schools to support learning.¹³ Facilitating access to English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) support in school settings assists students with their education.¹⁷ Hiring specialised EAL/D teachers and providing resources to help with interpretive responsibilities will ensure multicultural young people can thrive in their educational environments. Additionally, young people expressed a clear desire for curriculum adaptations to make learning more inclusive of other cultures, and to encourage language learning across educational institutions.

Employment

Multicultural young people (particularly from migrant and refugee backgrounds) face structural barriers to entering the workforce, reducing employment, and hindering career progression.¹⁴ Survey respondents repeatedly highlighted insufficient supports when moving into employment, and suggested the following to set them up for success:

- help with job applications
- access to translators and carers
- and guidance in navigating recruitment systems.

Without targeted and culturally responsive transition support, equal access to employment opportunities are likely to persist across generations.

“[The WA Government] should be more helpful when [multicultural] people are trying to find jobs.” -Young Person (Aged 16)

MYAN National outlined unique issues that disproportionately impact multicultural young people’s employment and careers, such as ‘occupational downgrading,’ which describes instances of under-employed due to a lack of recognition or use of skills

¹³ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia). (2023). *Shaping the future of Australian multiculturalism: realizing potential through multicultural youth participation*. https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2023_MYAN-Response-to-Multicultural-Framework-Review.pdf

¹⁴ Refugee Council of Australia, (2019). *What works: Employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/what-works-report/>

and qualifications in Australia.¹⁵ Many multicultural young people are forced to go through an assessment process, to verify and prove the validity of their skill set, however it is extensively time consuming and complex.¹⁹ To combat these barriers, MYAN National has recommended the implementation of a National Skills Passport (NSP), which is a government-led platform that stores individuals' qualifications and work history. The NSP would improve recognition of multicultural young people's skills and qualifications and increase their participation in the workforce.¹⁶ The development of a WA Multicultural Youth Employment Strategy would align with the model proposed by the Centre for Multicultural Youth to create sustainable employment pathways and reform qualification recognition.¹⁷

Recommendations

We recommend that the Act:

5. Requires targeted, culturally inclusive educational approaches to parent, carer, and student engagement across the education system.
6. Requires education institutions to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity through curriculum content and language education.
7. Requires government employment and economic development strategies to implement specific targets for multicultural young people and their communities.

2.3 Taking action against racism and discrimination

“Taking more action on racism and discrimination is a must” - Young Person (Aged 18)

¹⁵ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network. (2024, February 16). *Letter of Submission National Skill Passport Consultation Paper*. Retrieved from https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024_Letter-of-Submission-National-Skills-Passport-CP.pdf

¹⁶ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, (2024). *Submission to National Skill Passport Consultation Paper*. https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024_Letter-of-Submission-National-Skills-Passport-CP.pdf

¹⁷ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia). (2023). *Shaping the future of Australian multiculturalism: realizing potential through multicultural youth participation*. https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2023_MYAN-Response-to-Multicultural-Framework-Review.pdf

Young people were concerned about the ongoing hostility towards refugee and migrant communities, and believed it was pertinent for the Act to provide protections against racial discrimination. Over one third of WA young people experience unfair treatment and almost one in three face racial or cultural discrimination.¹⁸ These conditions compound existing barriers to employment, education, and social participation, highlighting the need for a stronger, proactive anti-discrimination action.

Despite the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA) (EOA)* ruling racial discrimination unlawful, the complaints-based mechanism of reporting is insufficient to address systemic barriers experienced by multicultural communities.¹⁹ Additionally, the *EOA* does not impose strong proactive duties on institutions to promote equity, nor does it explicitly recognise structural racism. As a result, protection relies heavily on individuals navigating complex legal processes, which may disproportionately burden those most impacted.

Existing mechanisms of reporting must be complemented with legislating a state-wide racial discrimination strategy to embed enforceable cultural safety standards across government services and agencies. These mechanisms must be monitored and regularly evaluated by an independent body to ensure appropriate and timely response to racial harms.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Act:

8. Establishes a statutory framework to embed multicultural equity across public services.

Summary

Guiding principles of the Act must promote a more inclusive, accessible, and safer society for everyone in WA. They must embrace the diversity of cultures we are privileged with in our communities. In doing so, it is crucial for the Act to enforce

¹⁸ Mission Australia, (2025). *Youth Survey 2025: Western Australia Results*. <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/evidence-impact-and-advocacy/research/youth-survey/youth-survey-reports/youth-survey-2025/>

¹⁹ Allen, D. (2025, June 15). 'Incredible burden' on the victim: The problem with Australia's anti-discrimination laws. Monash Business School. <https://www.monash.edu/business/impact-acceleration-grant-scheme/incredible-burden-on-the-victim-the-problem-with-australias-anti-discrimination-laws>

better protections for multicultural communities against racial discrimination and address the systemic barriers upholding these harms.

3. Government Responsibilities and Addressing Systemic Barriers

This section responds to the discussion paper’s focus on public sector responsibilities, service delivery, and accountability mechanisms.

Multicultural young people face systemic barriers that prevent them from fully participating in society. Survey respondents identified ways that the Act can bolster the impact of existing services across WA Government agencies. The Act must establish clear and enforceable obligations on public authorities to be effective. This must include reporting, monitoring, and independent oversight, without which the policy gaps may be reinforced rather than delivering consistent, systemic change.

The Act must identify initiatives and supports to address these barriers to ensure equitable, inclusive, and accessible supports and care for all young people.

3.1 Delivery of Government-funded Services and Support

The experiences of multicultural young people when engaging with government services is not readily reported on. There are calls for these services to collect and publish disaggregated data on service access and outcomes, broken down by cultural background.

The survey respondents shared mixed views about the adequacy of the WA Government’s current support for multicultural youth. While some acknowledge existing initiatives for multicultural communities, a considerable proportion expressed limited awareness of available services and support.

“The WA Government is doing a lot to support young people from multicultural backgrounds, However, I’m not always aware of everything [that] is available, and I think some support may not reach everyone equally. Because of this, it’s hard for me to know if enough is being done.” - Young person (Aged 13)

Those who were aware of the WA Government's initiatives reported a lack of impact and inadequate advertising to the public. Young people who speak English as an additional language are disproportionately impacted by the lack of advertising and impactful initiatives. Respondents called for increased investment in translation, interpretation, and cultural support services across government agencies. Investment in targeted advertising of services is essential to facilitate broad awareness and enable multicultural young people to engage with support.

To embed multiculturalism in the public sector, the Act must improve engagement with multicultural communities to ensure equitable access to government services and promote community participation. In 2024, records show that only 18.1% of people from multicultural communities are employed in the public sector,²⁰ despite representing 32% of Western Australia's population.²¹ This gap emphasises the significant underrepresentation of multicultural communities in the provision and delivery of services. To address this gap, there must be investment in the targeted recruitment of multicultural workers across government agencies and institutions, alongside community services. Additionally, funding community-led organisations to act as cultural brokers between government and multicultural families will strengthen trust, aid the navigation of services, and improve early intervention supports.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Act:

9. Requires targeted recruitment and retention of multicultural workers across government agencies and institutions.
10. Mandates investment for community-led organisations to act as cultural brokers between government and multicultural communities.
11. Mandates cultural safety standards and workplace protocols and training across government agencies.

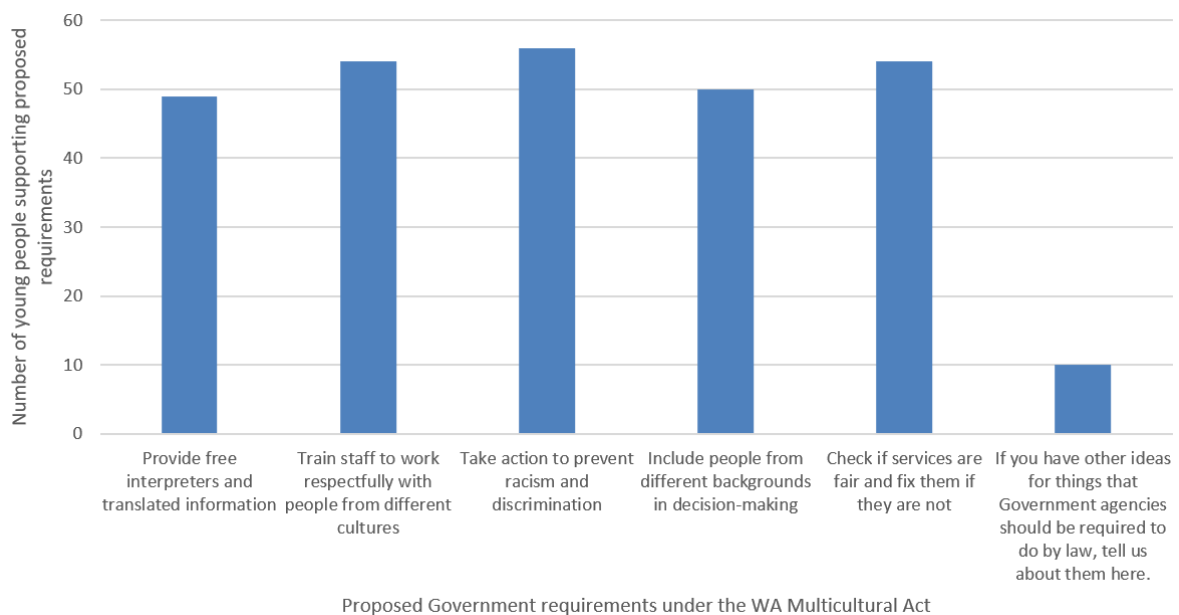
²⁰ Government of Western Australia, (2025). *Action plan: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People*. <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/multi-step-guides/workforce-diversity-and-inclusion/action-plan-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-people#:~:text=Tracking%20progress,work%20that%20is%20currently%20underway.>

²¹ Office of Multicultural Interests. (2025). *Census 2021 WA's Changing Population and Cultural Landscape*. Government of Western Australia. https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/docs/librariesprovider2/2021-census/omi-census-highlights-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=cb3ba120_31

3.2 Accountability and Legal Requirements of Services and Agencies

The Act must consider the legal responsibilities of government agencies and services to ensure they are inclusive and accessible for all and that they improve outcomes for multicultural young people. Young people surveyed by YACWA were asked about potential legislative methods of ensuring government services met the needs of multicultural communities, outlined in *Figure 2*. A total of 88% of respondents reported that it was crucial for the Act to prevent racism and discrimination in government agencies and services, highlighting the need for structurally based initiatives rather than the current individual-based reporting.

Figure 2. Young People's Responses to 'Which of the following do you think government services should be required to do by law?'



Multicultural young people are often placed at a further disadvantage when engaging with public services, especially where practitioners lack cultural responsiveness and an understanding of their lived experiences. This is especially evident in the mental health sector, where the trauma experienced by multicultural young people is frequently overlooked or inadequately addressed by practitioners.²² To best support

²² Luu, B., Fox, L., McVeigh, M. J., & Ravulo, J. (2024). Effectively supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people with their mental health and wellbeing – does this matter

multicultural young people, the Act should impose a statutory duty on public authorities to take reasonable and proportionate measures to ensure culturally safe service delivery, including mandatory training, monitoring, and reporting. This should be designed alongside multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and relevant community organisations.

Recommendations

See **recommendation one** (mandating involvement of multicultural and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people), and **recommendation two** (funding for a multicultural Youth Reference Group).

4. Working with Young People and their Communities

In addition to building the capacity of our community and government services, the Act must establish youth-led avenues to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and their ability to respond to the needs of multicultural young people. Multicultural young people hold a wealth of knowledge and valuable experience, and such mechanisms as an independent advisory body would enable them to shape policies and contribute to decision-making processes to reflect the needs of their communities.

Survey respondents expressed an ardent desire to be involved with decision-making processes relating to the Act. Almost 90% of respondents felt that ‘making sure everyone gets a say in decisions that affect them’ was an important aspect of the Act. Young people who identified as CaLD highlighted the importance of a multicultural advisory body having a set membership quota dedicated to young people.

Preferences in engagement methods also differed geographically. Young people in the metropolitan area favoured regular consultations as a form of direct engagement, whereas those based regionally preferred engagement through youth workers and local organisation. Despite these differences, many respondents highlighted engagement through educational institutions and youth groups could be an effective way to include young people’s perspectives in the Act.

or exist in Australia? *Social Work in Mental Health*, 22(2), 171–197.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2023.2273227>

“Young people could be included through school and community workshops where they can talk about their experiences and ideas in person. This would help young people who might not feel confident applying for roles or filling out surveys to still have their voices heard.” – Young Person (Aged 13)

The formation of a youth-specific multicultural advisory body was deemed favourable amongst 80% respondents. Youth reference groups (YRGs) are particularly effective at this, as the peer-based structure empowers them to create change and ensure the best practice of engagement.^{23 24} Multicultural young people have the necessary knowledge and experiences necessary to address the unique challenges they face, including navigating unfamiliar education and employment pathways, adapting to shifting family dynamics, and managing their identities alongside transitions through key developmental milestones. Additionally, they can recognise and understand the compounding issues of intersectionality through the complex lens of adolescence, including gender, sexuality, disability, geography, cultural context. A YRG is vital to the development and screening of culturally sensitive training for government employees, the implementation of effective policies relating to multiculturalism, and facilitating consultations with young people. While some expressed apprehension, this was identified because of previous experiences which involved inadequate accountability mechanisms and a lack of psychological safety.

“The safety and comfort of young people needs to be prioritised. Being in committees can be confronting, so ensuring that they have

²³ Bennin, F., Fynn, L., Fuzile, P., Yola, N., Julies, R., Sindelo, S., Madubela, N., Vundhla, P., Mpanda, Y., Jonas, M., Bekker, L., & Rousseau, E. (2024). “Youth are experts in what they need”: Experiences and best practice in co-designing and implements Fast-PrEP, a novel PrEP service for adolescents and youth in Cape Town, South Africa. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12, 1459418. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1459418>

²⁴ Ohlin, J., Heller, A., Byrne, S., Keevy, N. (2010). *How Young People Participate in Civic Activities Using Internet and Mobile Technologies*. National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. <https://www.education.gov.au/download/1174/how-young-people-participate-civic-activities-using-internet-and-mobile-technologies/1030/document/pdf>

*space to speak, feel included, and have the same level of 'power'" -
Young Person (Aged 16)*

87% of young people expressed the importance of encouraging young people to apply to the independent multicultural advisory body, emphasising youth-specific avenues of engaging with and including their perspectives.

Recommendations

See **recommendation one** (mandating involvement of multicultural and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people), and **recommendation two** (funding for a multicultural Youth Reference Group)

5. Inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The creation of a Multicultural Act provides an invaluable opportunity to build a legislative framework that not only acknowledges the state's diverse cultural landscape but also respects and elevates the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Survey respondents overwhelmingly supported the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with 90% of respondents agreeing this should be a central tenet of the Act.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a long and rich cultural history that predates the arrival of European settlers by more than 50,000 years, with more than 250 different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups spread across the nation.²⁵ To ensure a more inclusive and equitable society, it is critical to centre Indigenous perspectives and experiences in a contemporary multicultural framework.

Respondents believed recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia was a crucial step in recognising and embracing the diversity of cultures in WA. The Act must be developed alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their communities, and ensure there are quotas for Indigenous representation in any subsequent advisory bodies or groups.

²⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistic, (2021). Australia: 2021 Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats. [2021 Australia. Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

“Even though we come from different cultures, [we should be] respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia”- Young person (Aged 14)

Young people also felt it was important for the Act to facilitate the learning and exchange of Indigenous cultural understandings. Many respondents were eager to learn Indigenous languages and believed it should be included in school curriculums. Additionally, they expressed the need to mandate cultural awareness training for public sector and government employees. This training must be comprehensive, trauma informed and should be facilitated by an Aboriginal-led organisation.

“Special care should be paid to Aboriginal languages. It would be awesome if more people spoke them, and if the world's longest continuing cultures could have legal backing.” Young Person (Aged 16)

Recommendations

We recommend that the Act:

12. Formally recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia.
13. Embeds Indigenous language and cultural learning into the WA school curriculum.

Conclusion

“We can always do more to ensure our country is welcoming and safe.” -Young Person (Aged 18)

We welcome the Office of Multicultural Interests’ intent to pursue a Western Australian Multicultural Act. We believe that change is imperative, as there is still a long way to go to achieve an equitable and inclusive society.

The current system whereby the onus is on the individual to report, does not sufficiently meet the needs of multicultural young people. It is imperative that a legislative framework is implemented and enforced. This must be developed through meaningful consultation with young people from multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

This submission amplifies the voices of young people across Western Australia, highlighting not only their lived experiences but the nuanced expertise they bring to discussions of diversity and inclusion. The recommendations outlined in this submission are directly informed by their insights and reflect the need for meaningful change.

The Act must deliver tangible outcomes, embed accountability for discrimination and racism, and strengthen support and access to services for multicultural communities.

For further information on this submission, please contact: Katie Berry via email at katie@yacwa.org.au