

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

## Cultural diversity in Hobsons Bay

**Our health is determined by much more than genes and lifestyle decisions. It is determined by the circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. Cultural diversity can have positive effects on our health and wellbeing, adding significantly to the culture and quality of our lifestyles as well as interactions between individuals and groups.**

Through its various functions, local government plays a major role in protecting, improving and promoting the health of its residents. As the closest level of government to the community, councils work to understand the populations they serve and ensure that all residents are provided with an environment which allows everyone to equally achieve the best health and wellbeing possible.

This research summary is aimed at providing information about the social and environmental conditions that affect the health and wellbeing of Hobsons Bay residents.

### **How does culture, migration and the settlement process affect our health and wellbeing?**

Cultural diversity includes culture, language, race, faith and ethnicity differences arising from Australia's migration program (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2012).

UNESCO further articulates 'that culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (UNESCO, 2001). Cultural diversity brings many benefits, both economic and social to a community. This

includes strengthened connections with global marketplace, supporting the education sector through international students, providing diversity within retail and hospitality, building community resilience and tolerance, and building vibrant communities. These benefits can however be impacted by racism, discrimination and decreased social cohesion within the community (SGS Economics and Planning, 2016).

A number of factors associated with the migration and settlement process can also contribute to health problems. For example, refugees and asylum seekers are at greater risk of developing mental health problems and suicidal behaviors, compared to the general

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Australian population (Mental Health in Multicultural Australia, 2014).

In addition, Victorian data also shows that people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) have higher rates of doctor-reported diabetes, insufficient physical activity, and high or very high levels of psychological distress (Department of Health, 2012). On a positive note, people from NESBs are more likely to abstain or have low risk alcohol consumption patterns.

More generally, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are more vulnerable to a range of issues including low socioeconomic status, social isolation, barriers to accessing services, and lack of recognition of qualifications leading to poor employment options. CALD residents, particularly those who are newly arrived, are also more vulnerable to accessing inappropriate and insecure housing.

Lack of acceptance by some parts of the community can lead to race-based discrimination. This can lead to poor health and wellbeing, including anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, and stress-related illness. It may also increase unhealthy coping behaviours such as decreasing or disengaging from physical activity and community activities, and engaging with smoking and misusing alcohol and drugs (VicHealth, 2014).

Further problems may include restricted access to education, information, employment and social support, long-term social and material disadvantage, and lower rates of participation

in sports, cultural and civic activities (VicHealth, 2009).

Victorian data from May 2018 shows that people who have arrived in Australia in the past five years are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than people born in Australia (9.5 per cent vs 4.4 per cent). Some groups have particularly high rates of unemployment, including people arriving from North Africa and the Middle East (28.2 per cent) (ABS, 2018).

### What do we know about cultural diversity in Hobsons Bay?

#### Birthplace and ancestry

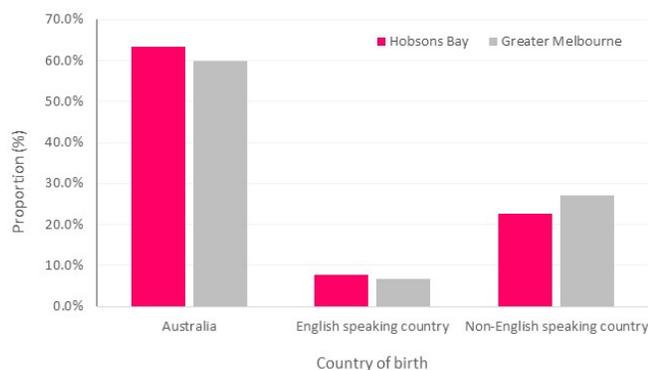
Data from the 2016 Census<sup>1</sup> shows that just over 30 per cent (27,024 people) of the Hobsons Bay population was born overseas, with residents coming from over 130 different countries and speaking more than 100 different languages. This is lower than both the Western Metropolitan Region (38 per cent) and Metropolitan Melbourne (34 per cent).

Figure 1 shows that a total of 22.6 per cent of Hobsons Bay residents (20,067 people) were born in a non-English speaking country, which is lower than the proportion for Greater Melbourne (27 per cent). Residents from non-English speaking countries are primarily from India (2.9 per cent of the Hobsons Bay population), Italy (1.7 per cent), Vietnam (1.6 per cent), Malta (1.3 per cent) and Greece (1.2 per cent). Between 2011 and 2016, the fastest growing non-English speaking groups include people born in India (+233 people), China (+204) and Pakistan (+170).

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, data in this section is sourced from ABS, 2016 Census of Population and Housing,

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**Figure 1: Country of birth, Hobsons Bay and Greater Melbourne, 2016<sup>2</sup>**

As Table 1 indicates, the neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of residents born in non-English speaking countries are Laverton (44.1 per cent), Brooklyn (32.5 per cent) and Altona North (32.3 per cent). Laverton recorded the largest increase between 2011 and 2016, adding 428 residents born in non-English speaking persons to the population.

The three most common ancestries of Hobsons Bay residents are English (27.4 per cent), Australian (25 per cent) and Irish (10.5 per cent), as was the case in 2011. Between 2011 and 2016, the fastest growing non-Anglo Saxon ancestries were Chinese (+647 people), Italian (+525) and Indian (+495).

Hobsons Bay residents who have arrived in Australia between 2011 and 2016, make up 19.5 per cent of the total overseas born population. On the other hand, 25 per cent of Hobsons Bay's overseas born residents arrived prior to 1970. Reflecting the migration trends of the time, many of these people were from Italy, Greece and Malta.

**Table 1: Residents born in non-English speaking countries, 2016**

Neighbourhood	Number	Proportion (per cent)
Laverton	2,163	44.2
Brooklyn	602	32.5
Altona North	3,966	32.2
Altona Meadows	5,482	28.6
Seabrook	1,420	27.7
Altona – Seaholme	2,317	18.2
Spotswood – South Kingsville	760	16.7
Newport West	1,216	14.5
Williamstown North – The Rifle Range	510	11.7
Newport East	494	11.3
Williamstown	1,241	11.1
<b>Hobsons Bay</b>	<b>20,067</b>	<b>22.6</b>

More recently, in the eighteen months prior to the 2016 Census, Hobsons Bay welcomed almost 1,500 people, primarily from India (27.9 per cent), New Zealand (8.4 per cent), China (6.7 per cent) and the Philippines (6.4 per cent) (Statistics for Victorian Communities, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> English speaking countries include United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States of America, Canada, Ireland and South Africa.

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Of the people who settled in Hobsons Bay in 2016-17, just over one-quarter (26.6 per cent) came through the family migrant visa category, compared to 16.8 per cent via the humanitarian and 13.1 per cent via family visa category. A large proportion (43.5 per cent) were classified as having an 'unknown' visa category (Statistics for Victorian Communities, 2018). This represents a shift from the period between 2006 and 2011, when skilled migration was the predominant visa type.

#### Language spoken and English proficiency

A total of 29 per cent of Hobsons Bay residents (25,695 people) speak a language other than English at home. The most common of these is Arabic, which is spoken by 3.4 per cent of the Hobsons Bay population. This is considerably higher than the rate for Greater Melbourne (1.7 per cent). Other common languages are Italian (2.7 per cent), Greek (2.7 per cent), Vietnamese (2 per cent), Mandarin (1.4 per cent), and Maltese (1.4 per cent). Between 2011 and 2016 there was a decline in the number who speak Italian (355 fewer people), and an increase in those who speak Mandarin (425 more people).

Language is a major barrier for people migrating to Australia. Almost five per cent of residents in Hobsons Bay (more than 4,300 people) report speaking English 'not well' or 'not at all'. This compares with a figure of 5.6 per cent for Greater Melbourne.

People who are newly arrived, (particularly people migrating through the humanitarian visa program) often have low rates of English language proficiency. However, low English proficiency is also evident across the entire

overseas born population, with women having higher rates of low or no English proficiency.

**Table 2: Number and proportion of people with low or no English proficiency by language, 2016**

Language	Number	Proportion (per cent)
Vietnamese	533	30.2
Arabic	417	13.9
Greek	416	17.8
Italian	389	16.6
Mandarin	353	27.6
Cantonese	233	26.1
Macedonian	213	20.0
Karen	197	60.1

Table 2 shows that some language groups in Hobsons Bay have relatively large numbers of people with low or no English proficiency, including Vietnamese (533 people), Arabic (417 people) and Greek (416 people). Additionally, substantial proportions of some language groups have low or no English proficiency, including Karen (60.1 per cent), Vietnamese (30.2 per cent) and Mandarin (27.6 per cent).

#### Religion

In regards to religion, almost 24,000 residents (27 per cent) are Roman Catholic, which is higher than Metropolitan Melbourne (23.2 per cent). The most common other faiths in Hobsons Bay are Anglican (7 per cent), Islam (5 per cent) and Greek Orthodox (4.1 per cent).

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The number of people claiming “no religion” has increased in every Census since 2001. More than 31 per cent of the population (over 27,500 people) have ‘no religion’, an increase of over 9,100 people between 2011 and 2016.

#### Community attitudes

In 2011, a survey of Hobsons Bay residents found that 56 per cent felt that multiculturalism has strengthened the community, higher than the Victorian rate of 51 per cent (VicHealth, 2012a). In 2015, Hobsons Bay residents expressed very strong agreement (97.5 per cent) that cultural diversity makes Hobsons Bay a better place to live (Metropolis Research, 2015). However, there was also mild agreement (78.6 per cent) that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds should make more effort to fit into the ‘Australian way of life’. In some cases, this lack of acceptance can lead to racist attitudes, as evidenced by a national survey that found that one in five people have experienced discrimination because of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion in the previous 12 months (Markus, 2017).

#### What government policies support cultural diversity?

##### International

Australia was a key player in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all people are entitled.

Australia is also a party to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), which outlines the rights of refugees and the

legal obligations of states towards refugees and asylum seekers.

##### Commonwealth

Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful (2017) is Australia’s multicultural statement. It sets the priorities and strategic direction for the Commonwealth Government’s commitment to multiculturalism in Australia.

The *Migration Amendment (Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals and Other Measures) Act 2013* introduced an amendment to the *Migration Act 1958*, which creates a separate process for asylum seekers arriving by boat.

Over the past five years, the Commonwealth Government has applied a policy of indefinite mandatory detention for asylum seekers who arrive without a prior valid visa (either by air or sea). On the 31 July 2018, a total of 1,345 people were held in detention with key sites being Villawood, Christmas Island and Yongah Hill, including 315 people who had arrived by boat (Refugee Council of Australia , 2018).

##### State

The *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* establishes key principles to foster a common understanding of cultural diversity. It also recognises the positive effect of cultural diversity on social, cultural and economic life in Victoria.

Operating under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, the Victorian Multicultural Commission is an independent statutory authority that provides advice to the Victorian Government on the development of legislative and policy frameworks and the delivery of services to CALD communities.

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Other Victorian legislation that supports protects and advances multiculturalism includes the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Victorian. And Proud Of It (2017) is Victoria's multicultural policy statement. It is underpinned by the Victorian Values Statement, which sets out the core values that help build a shared sense of belonging, respect, acceptance and contribution. The policy statement also outlines a range of expected outcomes focused on safety and security, health and wellbeing, participation, cultural connection, and genuine equality.

The Strategic Framework to Strengthen Victoria's Social Cohesion and the Resilience of its Communities was released in November 2015. It identifies key policy priorities to guide funding allocation, research grants, and alignment of initiatives to strengthen social cohesion and community resilience, and prevent violent extremism.

### What is council's role in relation to cultural diversity?

Local government plays an important role in responding to and supporting diversity in local communities. It does this through understanding the community, setting key organisational policy directions and actions.

The Hobsons Bay Multicultural Policy 2016–20 represents Council's commitment to celebrate local cultural traditions, promote respect for cultural diversity, and improve access to social, economic and civic opportunities, including activities within all areas of Council.

Through Council's consultation in developing its Multicultural Policy 2016–20, residents and stakeholders identified the following key issues for CALD communities in Hobsons Bay:

- language and communication barriers
- barriers to employment and education
- access to community facilities and social activities
- racism and discrimination
- access to Council services, facilities and decision-making processes

Council also delivers a range of cultural activities and celebrations including cultural diversity week, has become a Refugee Welcome Zone, supports networks across Hobsons Bay, and facilitates opportunities to engage in community activities.

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