



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

2023 MULTICULTURAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE CEREMONY

Tuesday 19 December 2023

Acknowledgments

Ingrid Stitt MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, *representing the Premier*

John Pesutto MP, Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Vivienne Nguyen AM, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

Commissioners of the Victorian Public Service

Nominators, Sponsors and Panel judges of the Multicultural Awards for Excellence

Award recipients

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the 2023 Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

Tonight's awards recognise the important work being done by Victorians and organisations to support multiculturalism in our State.

Of course, the rich diversity that has come to define the Victorian way of life isn't new.

Prior to European Colonisation, many First Peoples communities lived in what we now know as Victoria, each of them with their own traditions, culture or languages.

Collaboration and communication between these communities is evidenced by the practise of message sticks. Made from wood, messages are carved, incised and painted onto the sticks. And, while they could relate to any topic, the sticks were a sign of respect and acknowledgement between communities.

Contemporary Victoria and its approach to multiculturalism has developed from this foundation.

Across many years, international conflicts, global events and the appeal of a better life have brought people from around the world to settle in our State. They've brought their traditions, their art – and to the benefit of us all – their food.

Victoria is stronger thanks to its diversity, but it requires the support of individuals and communities to thrive.

Tonight's nominees represent the work being done across a range of sectors and industries to improve intercultural learning and social cohesion.

The categories of these awards offer insight into the many ways an individual or organisation can foster multiculturalism and diversity in this State.

Some have connected with others through music, dance or visual arts, sharing your traditions and expertise.

Others have formed close relationships through local sports.

And many have given back to our community by providing essential social services.

Regardless of your environment, each of you have contributed towards making our State a more welcoming place for all Victorians.

I'm conscious that these awards would not be possible without the work of the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Established in 1983, the Commission is, this year, celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Much has been achieved in that time.

This year alone, the Commission has done important work promoting, celebrating and advocating for cultural diversity in Victoria.

VMC Commissioners have attended more than 500 community events and showcased more than 18 multicultural artists.

The Commission has helped more than 450 participants enter the Multicultural Communities Leadership in Action Program.

And, it has advocated for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians through five submissions to state and federal governments.

It is a pleasure to see an increase in the impact and reach of the Commission's work.

Just as it's encouraging to see the development of these awards.

This is the second year the Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll will take place, having replaced the Meritorious Service to the Community award category.

The Roll recognises individuals who've made exceptional and lasting contributions to multiculturalism in Victoria and is focusing on local champions of diversity.

Reflecting on the importance of diversity in Australia, former Prime Minister Malcom Fraser once said, "*Australia did not, and does not, have an alternative to multiculturalism.*"

Indeed, when we consider the insight, collaboration and joy it brings to our community, there really is no alternative.

Thank you to the Commissioners, the judges, the sponsors and all those whose work has made this evening possible.

To VMC Chairperson, Vivienne Nguyen, who has recently been appointed for another four years!

And to each of you who have been nominated this evening.

Your work deserves to be celebrated and recognised and I look forward to seeing what you do next.

I now invite Minister Stitt to the lectern.