

# Multicultural action plan

2024



### **Acknowledgment of Country**

The NSW Electoral Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout New South Wales and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. Our head office is located on Gadigal land. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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# Background

## About the NSW Electoral Commission

**Our purpose** is to deliver trusted and independent systems, processes, oversight and engagement that support democracy in New South Wales.

**Our vision** is to maintain confidence in the integrity of the democratic process and make it easy for people to understand and participate.

## What we do

The NSW Electoral Commission is central to delivering democracy with integrity and fairness in New South Wales.

We conduct, regulate, and report on general elections and by-elections for the Parliament of New South Wales. We regulate and provide electoral services for local government elections. We also conduct the NSW Aboriginal Land Council elections and elections for registered clubs, statutory boards and state-registered industrial organisations (if engaged to do so). Our work includes:

- running independent, fair and accessible elections
  - providing transparent processes and guidance to assist political participants (including candidates, parties, elected members, donors, third-party campaigners and lobbyists) to comply with their obligations
  - publishing political donation and expenditure disclosures and registers of political parties, candidates' agents, third-party campaigners and third-party lobbyists
  - engaging with the public to make it easier for people to understand and participate in the democratic process
  - investigating possible offences and enforcing breaches of electoral, funding and disclosure, and lobbying laws
  - administering public funding schemes for the benefit of parliamentary parties, State candidates and independent Members of Parliament.
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## Policy context and strategic alignment

The *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* (NSW) establishes multicultural principles for the state of New South Wales. This Multicultural Action Plan has been developed according to the [Multicultural NSW Multicultural Policies and Services Program \(MPSP\)](#)

The MPSP assists agencies to advance multicultural principles and support culturally and linguistically diverse communities by guiding planning across four focus areas: service delivery, planning, leadership and engagement.

The NSW Electoral Commission Multicultural Action Plan (MCAP) 2024 is informed by several external policies, legislation and regulations, including:

- a. *Multicultural NSW Act 2000* (NSW)
- b. *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- c. *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW)
- d. *Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014* (NSW)
- e. *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014* (NSW)
- f. Public Service Commission guidelines: Respect, Reflect, Reset
- g. NSW Flexible Work Practices Policy and Guidelines
- h. Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful – Australia’s Multicultural Statement (2017)
- i. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- j. *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth)
- k. *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth).

This Multicultural Action Plan supports the delivery of the NSW Electoral Commission’s *Strategic Plan*.

### Multicultural Policies and Services Program

The NSW Electoral Commission has developed the MCAP 2024 according to the [MPSP Framework](#) . The MPSP Framework is outcome-focused and consists of:

- a. service delivery
  - b. planning
  - c. leadership
  - d. engagement.
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## Development of 2024 interim plan

The NSW Electoral Commission aims to update its MCAP every three years. For 2023, a one-year interim plan was developed to ensure the outcomes of several inter-dependencies, such as the 2023 NSW State election, and the NSW Electoral Commission's technology-assisted voting review, could be incorporated into future plans.

See the Appendix for an overview of the 2023 interim plan.

A new interim plan has been developed for 2024, with the purpose of covering the delivery of the 2024 Local Government elections scheduled for September. Establishing a 2024 interim plan ensures the NSW Electoral Commission can align a future three-year plan, covering 2025-28 to inter-dependencies such as Multicultural NSW's review of the MPSP and the next NSW Electoral Commission Strategic Plan both of which are being reviewed and updated in 2024. Further to this, the Electoral Commission is seeking additional funding for resourcing its stakeholder engagement. The outcome of this request will inform the design and scale of future Multicultural Action Plans.

## Governance and consultation

The Multicultural Action Plan 2024 commits the Electoral Commission to a range of activities that aim to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in NSW before, during and after state and local government elections.

To assist in developing meaningful and tangible actions, the NSW Electoral Commission engages its Culturally and linguistically diverse Reference Group to discuss key focus areas of each MCAP. This engagement also provides an opportunity to reflect on the barriers faced by people from CALD backgrounds and to determine priorities for the future.

The NSW Electoral Commission's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group includes representatives from peak bodies, government, and non-government organisations in the multicultural sector. The group provides valuable guidance and supports the NSW Electoral Commission to reduce additional barriers to electoral participation.

### Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group members

The NSW Electoral Commission is grateful for the ongoing support of its Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group members, which include:

- Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- Sydney Multicultural Community Services
- Local Government NSW
- Arab Council Australia
- CORE Community Services
- Local Community Services Association
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
- Multicultural NSW

# Action Plan

## 1. Provide language and translation support to voters,

### Actions

- a. Provide interpreter and language support to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).
- b. Provide in-language information on voting and elections on our website.
  - Consult with the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group to distribute this information with their networks and communities.
  - Engage more broadly with multicultural stakeholders to distribute information in-language.
- c. Maintain number of multilingual election staff at voting centres in communities where language support is required.
  - Assign multilingual staff based on demographics research and data analysis of the voting population in different districts.
  - Use demographics research to optimise workforce recruitment of multilingual staff.
  - Consult with the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group to promote work opportunities.
  - Engage with broader multicultural community stakeholders to distribute information about work opportunities.
  - Mirror diversity of the election workforce to represent the diversity of New South Wales.

### How we will measure success

- Consistent promotion of the TIS National interpreter service to the community and stakeholders.
- Translated information on elections and voting is offered and is reflective of the latest population (Census) language data in New South Wales.
- Information about our language support services and content is easy to find and use (based on web analytics).
- Maintain percentage of election officials identifying as speaking a language(s) in addition to English at the 2024 Local Government elections.

### Outcomes

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can receive key information regarding elections in their own language.
- Election staff can help people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in their own language at voting centres and polling places.

### Focus areas

- Service delivery
  - Planning.
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## 2. Targeted communications and services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities

### Actions

- a. Develop targeted media campaign for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds for the 2024 Local Government elections.
- b. Create and distribute in-language videos in seven languages (based on top languages identified in the 2021 Census in New South Wales overlaid with low English proficiency) for the 2024 Local Government elections covering:
  - enrolment
  - ballot papers
  - voting options
  - postal voting
  - general information regarding the elections
  - vote counting for local government elections.
- c. Publish a community resources page on the NSW Electoral Commission's website with key assets and translated stakeholder packs.
- d. Distribute a stakeholder resource pack to multicultural community organisations to share with their members and networks, including packs translated into the top seven languages.
- e. Expand the 'Vote here' banner trial and evaluate with different languages at voting centres (early voting and on election day) in areas of the Sydney metropolitan area where Census data indicates a substantial proportion of the population speak a particular language other than English.
- f. Develop political donation animations in thirteen languages and translated political donation content for the NSW Electoral Commission's website in twenty-four community languages.

### How we will measure success

- Campaign materials, such as factsheets and community resources for elections, are translated to at least seven languages based on the most recent data.
- In-language videos, and stakeholder packs, are developed and distributed.
- A community resources web page is created before the 2024 Local Government elections
- "Vote here" banners at targeted venues include additional languages and the trial is evaluated.
- Web and digital analytics on viewership and engagement.
- People from CALD backgrounds are aware of their voting options and increased satisfaction with the overall voting experience as indicated by the post-election survey.

### Outcomes

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds know that an election is occurring and what to do.
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds receive engaging and important information on the 2024 Local Government elections in-language.

### Focus areas

- Planning
- Service Delivery
- Engagement.



### 3. Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, organisations and stakeholders

#### Actions

- a. Partner with community organisations to provide strong community engagement and communication to culturally and linguistically diverse communities for the 2024 Local Government elections.
- b. Consult, engage and share information with the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group for the 2024 Local Government elections and other important matters.
- c. Distribute communications to multicultural community organisations.
- d. Collaborate with the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) and Australian state and territory electoral commissions to share knowledge and learnings about elections and service delivery.
- e. Continue to include the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) at Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group meetings to work together to engage communities in New South Wales.
- f. Commission independent research to better understand voting experience of culturally and linguistically diverse electors, identifying barriers and opportunities at the 2024 Local Government elections.

#### How we will measure success

- Independent research is conducted to understand the voting experience for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse community organisations to deliver in-language community engagement and communications on voting and elections is conducted prior to the 2024 Local Government elections.
- Relevant and timely communication materials are distributed to multicultural organisations in New South Wales, in line with our communications calendar.
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group meetings occur post the 2024 Local Government elections to identify and assess areas of focus for future elections.

#### Outcomes

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds understand the New South Wales electoral process.
- Peak bodies for culturally and linguistically diverse communities are consulted on plans and programs.

#### Focus areas

- planning
  - engagement.
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## 4. Consultation and governance for long-term planning

### Actions

- a. The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference group is consulted to collaborate in the development of future Multicultural Action plans.
- b. Any changes or insights from the review by Multicultural NSW into the MPSP framework are incorporated into the development of future Multicultural Action plans.
- c. Any relevant outcomes from the NSW Electoral Commission technology-assisted voting review are incorporated into future planning.
- d. Community engagement and research are used for future planning.
- e. Progress on all actions in the Multicultural Action Plan is reported to the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group.
- f. Cultural awareness training is incorporated into all future Multicultural Action Plans.

### How we will measure success

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group meetings and workshops are well-attended by the community stakeholders as part of the development process for future Multicultural Action plans.
- Insights from research and reviews are incorporated into future Multicultural Action plans.

### Outcomes

- Evidence-driven planning.
- Collaboration with diverse communities and understanding the needs of people from diverse backgrounds.

### Focus areas

- planning
  - engagement
  - leadership.
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# Appendix

## Multicultural Interim Action Plan 2023 achievements

The NSW Electoral Commission seeks to deliver elections that meet the diverse access needs of voters across the State. The following information reports on the services provided for electors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds for the NSW State election in March 2023. Further information regarding services provided can be found in the [2023 NSW State election report](#).

### 1. Provision of language and translation support to voters.

- The Electoral Commission provided interpreter and in-language support during the 2023 NSW State election through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and in-language information on voting and elections on the [NSW Electoral Commission's website](#) in 27 languages (including Auslan).
- The 26 spoken languages were: Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Greek, Korean, Italian, Spanish, Macedonian, Turkish, Serbian, Khmer, Assyrian Neo-Aramaic, Croatian, Persian, Thai, Portuguese, Russian, Lao, Dari, Hindi, Indonesian, Bengali, Tagalog, Maltese, and Polish.
- The Electoral Commission also increased the diversity of its election staff, of the more than 21,000 staff engaged to work on election day for the 2023 State election, 27.53 per cent spoke a language other than English (an increase from the 2019 and 2015 State elections).<sup>1</sup>

Election day staff	2023 State election (election day officials only)	2019 State election	2015 State election
Speak a language in addition to English	27.53%	20.83%	20.63%

Table showing the percentage of staff speaking a language in addition to English during past three NSW State elections.

- In addition to the translated materials on the NSW Electoral Commission website, translated video resources were created for the 2023 NSW State election in seven languages (Arabic, Cantonese, Greek, Italian, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese) with topics including:
  - voting at the 2023 State election
  - how to fill out ballot papers
  - how to vote by post
  - enrolling and voting with no fixed address
  - checking voters' district: redistribution and the 2023 NSW State election

### 2. Targeted communications and services for CALD communities

- The Electoral Commission provided stakeholder communications kits translated into the top seven most prevalent non-English languages spoken in NSW by people with low English proficiency.
- These kits collated in-language community awareness videos, resources, key messages, and assistance available to voters for the 2023 NSW State election. The kits were distributed to target

<sup>1</sup> NSW Electoral Commission (2023), Report on the administration of the 2023 NSW State Election, p. 57

community organisations, promoted by the CALD reference group members and were available on the Electoral Commission's community resources webpage.

- The seven languages used for targeted communication for CALD communities were selected using analysis of 2021 Census data for language spoken at home other than English – indexed with low English proficiency.

### 3. Engaging with CALD organisations and stakeholders

- For the 2023 NSW State election, the Electoral Commission partnered with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW (ECCNSW) to deliver the [Vote Talk program](#).
- Vote Talk is a series of community-led education, engagement and communication initiatives on voting and elections. ECCNSW provided targeted education, public podcasts and community conversations to raise the awareness of electoral processes and improve the voting practices and participation of Australian citizens over 18 years of age with a CALD background. For the 2023 NSW State election, the Vote Talk program included:
  - 24 in-language podcasts (across the top seven languages).
  - Community engagement sessions run by ECCNSW bilingual facilitators (with 505 participants over 30 sessions in six languages).
  - Pre-recorded in-language messages on how to fill out ballot papers played on community radio.
- The Vote Talk program was evaluated using a 'before and after' survey format. An indication of the success of the program is shown by the change in responses from participants pre- and post-engagement. Confidence in, and knowledge of, voting options and how to vote at the 2023 NSW State election increased from 28.6 per cent (pre-engagement) to 86.7 per cent (post-engagement).

### 4. Culturally and linguistically diverse approach to advertising campaigns

The media and awareness campaigns for the 2023 NSW State election included advertisements and social media content for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These campaigns included:

- **Voter awareness** - a voter awareness campaign was rolled out from mid-December 2022 to March 2023 that included information relating to changes to electoral district boundaries and targeted messaging around checking enrolment and knowing voting options.
- **Stop and Consider** - The NSW Electoral Commission ran an awareness campaign encouraging voters to consider the information they saw and heard that may have sought to influence their vote at the 2023 NSW State election. The campaign, called 'Stop and consider', ran from 13 February to 8 April 2023 across various digital and print media in New South Wales and provided voters with information to help assess potential mis- and disinformation. The campaign included translated digital and print advertising in seven languages: Cantonese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, Greek, Italian and Korean. This campaign was funded from a special purpose grant by the then Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- **Recruitment** - A social media recruitment campaign was supported by press releases, community groups, schools, TAFE, colleges, universities, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and many volunteer organisations across New South Wales to promote the opportunity to work at the election. The NSW Electoral Commission worked with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to contact more than 70,000 of the AEC's database of election workers to encourage them to apply
- **Political donations** - The NSW Electoral Commission ran several tranches of political donations public awareness campaign to educate people in New South Wales about political donations laws and specific changes that make cash donations over \$100 to political participants unlawful. Another tranche of the campaign was run during the 2023 NSW State election period across digital and social media. The translated information and animations were published on the [NSW Electoral Commissions website](#).

## 5. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group engagement

For the 2023 NSW State election, the NSW Electoral Commission consulted with its Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Reference Group. These consultations formed the basis of the planning for the election.

The reference group provide guidance, information, and feedback to the NSW Electoral Commission in relation to services for electors and to ensure that accessibility barriers to these services are identified and solutions to these barriers are reflected in the programs and services. This included ensuring that a range of communication formats and channels are used to inform people about enrolment, elections and voting.

During 2023 the NSW Electoral Commission held three formal meetings with the reference group.