

MULTICULTURAL RECOGNITION ACT

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD



THE PROJECT

As part of the 10th Parliamentary Agreement, the ACT Government committed to developing a Multicultural Recognition Act for the ACT. We are proud the ACT is a culturally diverse community and this new law will enshrine the value that we as a community place on cultural and linguistic diversity.

THE CONVERSATION

We held conversations online, face-to-face, and directly with stakeholders from 19 April to 31 May 2021.

To develop the law, we spoke to the Canberra community to ensure the Act reflected your views. We sought views on:

- what should be included in the Multicultural Charter
- what multiculturalism means to you, and what principles and values best reflect this in our community
- the proposed role and make-up of the Multicultural Advisory Council.



WHO ENGAGED

Key contributors who provided feedback on the proposed Act:

- members of the wider ACT community through the YourSay survey and six face-to-face community consultation sessions;
- Multicultural Advisory Council;
- The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs;
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body;
- Legislation, Policy and Programs (LPP) Branch Human Rights Scrutiny team;
- The ACT Human Rights Commission;
- Parliamentary Counsel's Office; and
- Community collective advocacy group, DEiFY.

Additionally, the Joint Advisory Council Chairs was approached for comment by the Chair of the Multicultural Advisory Council, which resulted in feedback provided from the Office for LGBTIQ Affairs.

Formal submissions were received from:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
- Multicultural Advisory Council
- Canberra Multicultural Community Forum.

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Key insights from the community

The need for the Act, and specifically the Charter, to be meaningful, with accountability measures

1. Accountability measures are key to ensure that the Act has practical application and tangible benefit for the community. For example, implementing reporting requirements for ACT Government directorates and 'positive duty' standards for government and non-government organisations.

Consideration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

2. Acknowledgement of First Nations Peoples in the Act as a primary consideration.
3. Many participants expressed that acknowledgement was imperative, but that it is important not to conflate First Nations Peoples and multicultural communities.
4. There is strong support for First Nations Peoples to be acknowledged as the original inhabitants and traditional custodians of the ACT.

Importance of language and terminology

5. Many respondents suggested the Charter should comprise:
 - Strengths-based language
 - Clear definition, and core values, of multiculturalism in the ACT;
 - Race and racism – state a commitment to addressing social and systemic racism and discrimination;
 - Acknowledgement of language as central to the preservation and recognition of cultural identity; and
 - Settlement as a key issue for multiculturalism.

Commitment to Australia and the rule of law

1. Further consideration to the wording of the statement of a commitment to Australia and the rule is required as public opinion is divided on the role, importance, and potential discriminatory implications of this concept in relation to multiculturalism.
2. The YourSay feedback generally reflected strong support for these concepts, and verbal feedback provided in face-to-face discussions reflected mixed views on their inclusion in legislation promoting multiculturalism.

The Multicultural Advisory Council (MAC)

3. The Council should have independence and direct access to the Minister.
4. The Terms of Reference should not be too prescriptive/evaluative in functions to allow for changing social and political landscape.
5. The Council could have a dual role as a conduit between the community and the Minister/Government as well as providing advice to the Minister.
6. Differing community views were expressed about the formation of the MAC; i.e. should its role primarily be to represent the ACT's evolving cultural demographics OR to amplify voices of smaller/emerging communities?
7. The importance of transparency – e.g. making meeting minutes/advice to Minister available to public. The Council should be adequately resourced to consult with community.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The views sought from the community will be used to inform the development of the Multicultural Recognition Act. To find out more about the Multicultural Recognition Act and other initiatives, policies and projects in Canberra visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au

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Key Timings

Community and sector consultation – April to May 2021

Listening Report released – July 2021

Bill drafted – June to September 2021

Bill tabled in the Legislative Assembly – November 2021

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

63

We spoke to 63 individuals
at our face-to-face
community forums

73

We received 73 online
responses via YourSay