ACT Government Logo

Community Services Directorate

Discussion Paper

Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism

February 2023

# Terms of Reference for the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism

A new Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism will be established following the introduction of the *Multiculturalism Act 2023*.

The functions, membership numbers, and appointment process for the Council have already been agreed based on previous consultations on the proposed legislation and consistent with other advisory councils in the ACT.

To guide operation of the Council, a Terms of Reference will be created. To assist us develop this, we would like to hear from you about:

* **Membership and representation**
* **Community engagement**
* **Accountability and transparency**

## 1. Membership and representation

### What we want to know:

1. **What specific areas of expertise could be considered when selecting members for the Council?**
2. **What processes should be in place to ensure marginalised communities and new and emerging communities are represented on the Council or through community consultations?**

### What we are proposing:

The Council’s main objective is to **represent the broad and diverse voices** of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the ACT. This may include people of different:

* generations of migrants and families (including people who have arrived on permanent or temporary visa, skilled visa, family and humanitarian migration, and those studying or seeking asylum).
* residency or immigration status
* age groups
* abilities
* sexualities
* gender identities

The Minister will also consider selecting Council members with specific expertise and who demonstrate a commitment and ability to:

* advance multiculturalism in the ACT
* make a positive contribution within multicultural communities
* understand contemporary, local issues relevant to cultural or linguistic diversity
* **engage** with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Canberra and **facilitate** **genuine consultations**
* create an inclusive community
* improve their local community and **share information** about services and programs
* contribute their community perspectives to **inform ACT Government policies and programs**, and
* **participate** fully in Council activities, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

## 2. Community engagement

### What we want to know:

1. **What are ways the Council can engage with the community to ensure your voice is heard?**
2. **What mechanisms should be in place to ensure the Council is approachable for all members of community?**

### What we are proposing:

The draft Terms of Reference reflect community expectations of connection and engagement and require Council members to:

* collectively **hold one community forum each year**, with the Minister
* regularly **engage with communities** to identify views, needs and priorities and advise the Minister
* ensure **messages from community consultations regularly reach the Minister**
* **report back to the Council and Minister on consultations** they have conducted and **identify and prioritise actions** to address the challenges expressed by diverse community groups, and
* clearly **identify target groups for engagement** and share these with the Minister.

## 3. Accountability and transparency

### What we want to know:

1. **How can we ensure additional transparency from the Council? What other mechanisms would you like the Council to commit to?**
2. **What are your suggestions for promoting the Council and ensuring people in the community know about the Act and the Council, and any public engagement it undertakes?**

### What we are proposing:

The Act requires the Council to deliver an Annual Report on its activities which will be made publicly available. To ensure further transparency of the Council throughout the year, other suggested reporting mechanisms in the Terms of Reference are for the Council to:

* develop and publish a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan**
* develop and publish an **Annual Plan** with proposed activities
* prepare and publish a **Communications Plan** to promote their work
* publish a **summary of key issues discussed and actions planned** after each meeting
* **engage in local community events** and gatherings to promote the work of the Council, members’ role on the Council and the importance of the Act. The members will engage community members through promoting an ‘Ask the Minister’ form where community members can ask the Minister questions relating to Canberra being an inclusive and welcoming city and raise issues of concern, and
* **collaborate with other ministerial advisory bodies** and relevant ACT Government agencies.

## BACKGROUND

### Purpose:

The *Multiculturalism Act 2023* (the Act) establishes a new Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism (the Council). The Council will advise the Minister for Multicultural Affairs on the aspirations, needs and concerns of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Act details the functions, membership and appointment of the Council and reflects feedback from community consultations held in 2021 and 2022 as follows:

### Functions:

The function of the Council is to:

* Advise the Minister on:
* ways to promote multiculturalism, including strategies for: increasing community engagement in ACT Government consultation processes; reducing barriers for Canberra’s culturally and linguistically diverse community; welcoming and including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
* the accessibility, sustainability and effectiveness of government policies, programs in promoting multiculturalism. The Council plays a role in ensuring the needs of people from diverse backgrounds are considered by the ACT Government when developing, implementing and evaluating policies, programs and services.
* Consult with individuals and organisations in the ACT on promoting multiculturalism and learn about the changing needs and priorities of diverse communities in the ACT.

### Membership:

* The Council will consist of a Chair, Deputy Chair and 9 other members representing the diverse cultural, gender, age, residency, immigration status and generations of migrants who call Canberra home. These numbers were selected to align with membership of other legislated councils and in response to feedback provided in community consultations.
* The Council will be as representative of the culturally and linguistically diverse ACT community as possible.

### Appointment:

* Members of the community can apply for Council membership through a through a merit-based selection process by submitting a written application and providing details of community referees.
* Council members will be appointed on an individual basis and have a demonstrated commitment to multiculturalism.
* Members are appointed for a term of 3 years and can serve a maximum of two terms (cumulatively).
* The Minister can end an appointment if a member is absent from 2 consecutive meetings.

Council members will be paid under the ACT Remuneration Tribunal determination and will have access to secretariat support by an ACT Government staff member. The ACT Government may also provide data or information required for the work of the Council.

Further detail can be found at: [Multiculturalism Act 2023 | Acts](https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2023-3/) and the Listening Report at: [Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism | YourSay ACT](https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/multiculturalism-advisory-council).

### Terms of Reference:

A Terms of Reference detailing operational matters for the Council has not been included in the legislation as it needs to be flexible enough to allow for changing priorities.

We are seeking your input to ensure the Terms of Reference reflect the interest of multicultural communities. It is particularly important the Council represents the diversity in the ACT. This includes new and emerging communities who may experience different challenges and barriers to participation in the ACT community compared to the general community. We would like to hear from you on what should be included in the Terms of Reference in three key areas as described above.

A draft Terms of Reference can be viewed at: [Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism | YourSay ACT](https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/multiculturalism-advisory-council).