

# The Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) program

## Information sheet

Reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity



### About race-based discrimination and diversity

Social cohesion and a 'fair go' for all are necessary for healthy people and communities. Valuing Victoria's cultural diversity and Aboriginal heritage and making sure our communities and organisations are free from race-based discrimination are important steps in achieving this.

**Race-based discrimination** involves practices and behaviours that result in unfair and avoidable inequalities between groups in society based on race, religion, culture or ethnicity. This is broader than the legal definition. It covers both **interpersonal discrimination** (occurring between individuals) and **systemic discrimination** (discrimination as a result of practices, policies or cultures within organisations).

Discrimination may not always be obvious or intentional. It may occur because of practices developed over many years that inadvertently exclude or disadvantage people from certain cultural backgrounds. It is also common, affecting three in every four Aboriginal Victorians and nearly half of all people from culturally diverse backgrounds in their lifetimes (VicHealth 2008).

**Supporting diversity** involves respecting and valuing a range of ways of living and being, within democratic and human rights frameworks, governed by the rule of law.

### Why work to reduce discrimination and support diversity?

Studies show that exposure to discrimination can increase the risk of developing poor mental health, especially anxiety and depression, and is linked to obesity, alcohol and substance abuse, and smoking. There is emerging evidence that it can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.\*

At a community level, discrimination and intolerance can lead to tension and conflict and undermine business performance (Forrest & Dunn 2007; Nicholas et al. 2001). In contrast, valuing and nurturing our cultural diversity can increase the prospects of good mental health for individuals and, importantly, has benefits for businesses and the economy (Putnam 2007; Pérotin, Robinson & Loundes 2003, VicHealth 2009).

### Introducing LEAD

VicHealth has identified supporting diversity and reducing race-based discrimination as a priority for action in the *VicHealth strategy and business plan 2009–2013*.

An effective way to reduce discrimination and support diversity is through a coordinated range of actions with individuals, communities and organisations within a specific locality. This forms the basis of the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) program. By taking this approach, LEAD aims to have a wide reach in the community to bring about long-lasting cultural change.

In late 2009, LEAD was established as a pilot program in partnership with two local governments: the Cities of Greater Shepparton and Whittlesea. Both councils were selected because of their strong track record in supporting cultural diversity and promoting health.

\* Based on Paradies' (2006) peer-reviewed protocol (updated in 2011).



It is important to support culturally diverse and Indigenous communities to respond to the disadvantage and discrimination they experience (as shown in the two left hand boxes in Figure 1 below). However, this must be complemented by measures that engage organisations and the whole community to ensure that they operate in an inclusive and fair way, which is the focus of the LEAD program (as shown below in blue). This work can help to prevent disadvantage and exclusion from occurring in the first place, or from becoming worse.

LEAD focuses on this because it is an area where there is very little existing practice and much to learn.

**What is LEAD doing?**

The City of Whittlesea and Greater Shepparton City Council are delivering and evaluating a range of activities targeted to individuals, organisations and the wider community (see Figure 2). These aim to strengthen practices, policies, cultures and environments, so that people from migrant, refugee and Aboriginal backgrounds get a 'fair go' and are able to participate fully across a range of settings. All activities are delivered in partnership with local organisations such as local workplaces, media, retail stores, sporting clubs and schools.

Activities are being supported and reinforced through tailored communications activities and a newly-developed, targeted social marketing campaign called *See Beyond Race*.

**What are the aims of LEAD?**

- The program aims to:
- promote positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and decrease discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within whole communities
  - encourage the implementation of policies and practices that promote diversity and prevent discrimination within local organisations
  - create more inclusive local environments with diverse local identities
  - support the capacity of local governments and their communities to create harmony
  - build knowledge and evidence in the primary prevention of discrimination
  - assess the strengths and limitations of the LEAD model and use learnings from the program to help shape future policies, programs and practice.

**A partnership approach**

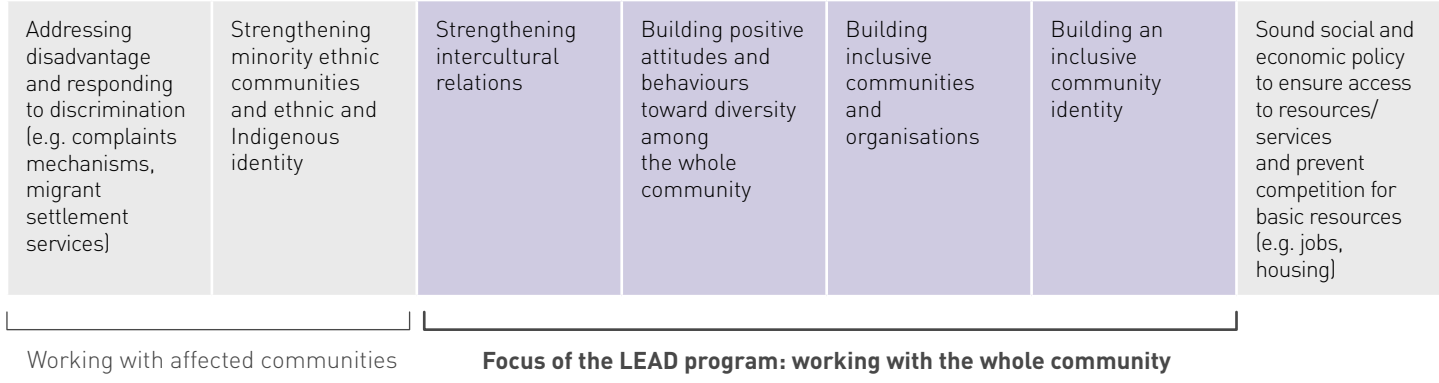
The councils are implementing LEAD in partnership with local communities, VicHealth, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the University of Melbourne's School of Population Health.

Led by VicHealth, the LEAD program is being established with co-funding from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). Program evaluation is supported by *beyondblue: the national depression and anxiety initiative*.

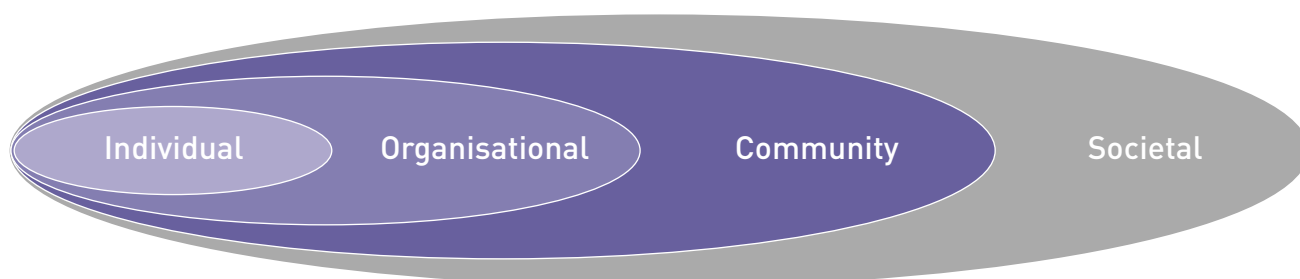
**How does LEAD complement other work being done by VicHealth and local governments?**

Building social cohesion and reducing disadvantage affecting culturally diverse and Aboriginal communities involves an integrated range of responses as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Building social cohesion and eliminating disadvantage: A spectrum of measures**



**Figure 2. The LEAD model: A multi-level approach**



<p><b>Individual level activities</b></p> <p>Equal opportunity and cultural competency training are provided along with a specialised program to raise awareness of race-based discrimination, its health impacts and the benefits of diversity. The training also engages participants in looking at ways that they and their organisations can strengthen their responses to diversity. Training is provided by VEOHRC and is tailored to each of the LEAD settings.</p>	<p><b>Organisational level activities</b></p> <p>An initial consultation and survey is undertaken in each setting, followed by a process of self-assessment to identify policy and procedural areas for improvement. An action plan is then developed to provide a guiding framework to help generate lasting organisational change. Additional resources are currently being developed and implemented to assist this work.</p>	<p><b>Community level activities</b></p> <p>The activities within settings are supported by the <i>See Beyond Race</i> social marketing campaign. The campaign features local residents and aims to challenge racial stereotypes and encourage appreciation of our common humanity. It includes advertising on billboards, buildings, buses, bus shelters, in local newspapers, and in Shepparton, local radio and television.</p> <p>This is supported by communications opportunities identified by councils and newspaper features on people from the campaign, through a partnership with local media.</p>
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## Other features of the program

### Engagement of local communities and community leaders

Both LEAD projects are working closely with local communities through a range of formal and informal means, including advisory committees involving community representatives. They are working with representatives of local Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities to ensure that they have input into the development of project activities and can confidently act as advocates for their communities.

### Using the best available evidence and a ‘program logic’

Strategies used in LEAD have been developed on the basis of research into what contributes to discrimination and intolerance of diversity and what is known about the best way to respond to these factors. This research was used to develop the *Building on our strengths* framework ([www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/buildingonourstrengths](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/buildingonourstrengths)). Used to guide LEAD, the framework is based on a ‘program logic’ approach so that the partners can be as confident as possible that efforts will be well targeted and effective. Researchers from the University of Melbourne are also providing advice on best practice approaches.

### Evaluation

A multi-disciplinary team of researchers from the University of Melbourne’s School of Population Health are conducting an evaluation of all LEAD activities so that the lessons learned can be shared with others.

### Sharing outcomes with others

The MAV is playing a central role in facilitating engagement across the wider local government sector. A range of resources are being developed to implement LEAD, such as self-assessment tools and implementation guides, which may be useful to others, in particular other local governments. Once developed, piloted and evaluated these resources will be shared with other local governments with the assistance of MAV.

## Local activities



### The City of Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea ([www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au)) is working with a range of organisations, including a large local employer (Mushroom Exchange), retailers at Westfield Plenty Valley, three schools (Thomastown West Primary School, Lalor East Primary School, Lalor Secondary College) and Whittlesea Leader.

The City of Whittlesea's *See Beyond Race* campaign comprised advertising inside and outside buses, on bus shelters, in a local paper and on table tops at a local shopping centre.

Supporting public relations activities included a strategic media partnership with Whittlesea Leader and distribution of campaign materials to local businesses, schools, sporting clubs and community centres.

### Greater Shepparton City Council

The Council ([www.greatershepparton.com.au](http://www.greatershepparton.com.au)) is working in partnership with private and public schools, including Murchison Primary School, McGuire College and Wanganui Park Secondary College. The Brokerhouse (a small local business) and Bunnings (one of the largest local employers) are also participating in the project. In 2012, the project will expand to include involvement from local sport clubs and arts organisations.

The Shepparton *See Beyond Race* campaign was broadcast on local television and radio and featured at sports grounds, in local newspapers and around the city on council advertising space such as town flags and on billboards.

## References

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Forrest, J & Dunn, KM 2007, 'Constructing racism in Sydney, Australia's largest Ethnic City', *Urban Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 699-721.

For further information about the LEAD program and other initiatives being undertaken by VicHealth to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity visit [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au) or email [lead@vichealth.vic.gov.au](mailto:lead@vichealth.vic.gov.au)