

WELCOMING COMMITTEES

Examples of Welcoming Activities in Regional Victoria

Organisations Involved & Contact Details

Various

Aims & Target Group

Welcoming committees are a useful means of building good relationships between long-time residents and new arrivals to a local community. Below are some examples from regional Victoria.

Project Description & Components

The following examples represent just some of the welcoming activities for new arrivals that have been implemented in regional Victorian communities. These examples may provide inspiration for the development of future activities in your community.

Woven Lands Arts Project (Warrnambool)

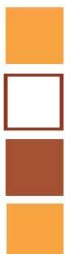
This ten week project brought together local, Indigenous and migrant women and saw them work on traditional and contemporary woven pieces. Warrnambool City Council provided a letter of support for the project grant application, and provided in-kind support throughout its duration. As a part of the project, the local Koori community invited the broader population in Warrnambool to a special 'welcome to country' celebration with traditional Indigenous and Sudanese dancing. The Woven Lands Art Project also saw weekly meetings for the women involved emerge, and these meetings provided those attending with opportunities for fun, socialising and a sharing of experiences.

Multicultural Ambassador Program (Ballarat)

This program was instigated by the City of Ballarat as a part of their overall regional skilled migration strategy, and saw Multicultural Ambassadors nominated and selected from the community. Multicultural Ambassadors are elected for a two year period in which they promote multiculturalism in the region through public speaking engagements and working collectively on community development projects.

Bendigo Newcomers Club (Bendigo) <http://www.bendigonewcomers.com>

The Bendigo Newcomers Club organises social activities for new arrivals in Bendigo and works to expand social networks and allow friendships to develop. Membership is open to anyone in the region who would like to join, and as a result the club boasts a mixture of new arrivals as well as long term members of the community.





WEAVE Program (Shepparton)

The WEAVE program—a *community Welcome to Ethnic families through Assistance, Volunteer, orientation and Education*—works to match new arrivals with a volunteer and assist in orientation and settlement processes. The WEAVE program was developed through City of Greater Shepparton and trains volunteers to assist new arrivals in a variety of tasks associated with settlement. The tasks volunteers assist new arrivals with include locating local places of interest, service providers, linking to local sporting and service clubs and also undertaking daily activities such as using public transport and shopping. Volunteers for the WEAVE program received training on cross cultural awareness and other issues pertaining to volunteering from the local Equity and Access worker.

Wahines Women's Singing Group (Bendigo)

Established in 2000, the Wahines Women's Singing Group emerged from the Bendigo Regional Ethnic Communities' Council. The singing group meets every second Monday to sing songs from all around the world. The singing group is a fun social activity for the women who participate and also a good opportunity to share experiences and seek advice in a welcoming environment. The Wahines have performed on many occasions within Bendigo and also travelled to perform at other Victorian festivals.

'My Story' Writing Class (Bendigo)

The Bendigo Regional Ethnic Communities Council (BRECC) initiated the 'My Story' writing class and invited migrant members of the Bendigo community to record their life stories. BRECC provided funding for an English teacher to work in partnership with migrants as a part of the program. The 'My Story' writing class has been positively received and the next step for the program will be to secure funding to publish the stories as a collection—highlighting the multicultural character of Bendigo.

Confidence Building Workshops (Bendigo)

The Bendigo Regional Ethnic Communities Council organised separate confidence building workshops for men and women in the region over weekends. The workshops gave participants the opportunity to identify issues facing their communities and collectively consider strategies to overcome such issues.

Establishing Incorporated Associations (Shepparton and other regions)

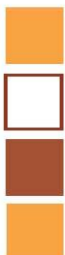
The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District has provided practical advice and guidance, assisting several ethnic groups in Shepparton to establish incorporated associations. The most recent community to be assisted in this process is the Congolese community and they are soon to be established as an incorporated association. Incorporated associations work to foster strong networks which members can draw upon for support and advice. In addition, incorporated associations are well structured to advocate for the needs of members and also receive relevant information from the broader community.

Inclusive Games Project (Geelong)

The 'Inclusive Games' project developed to expand the social networks of refugee young people in Geelong. Diversitat (formerly the Geelong Ethnic Communities' Council) implemented the project with the support of Barwon Health, Leisure Networks and North Geelong Secondary College. Over the twelve week period of the program each of the fifteen participants sampled different sports, including cricket, hockey and sailing. At the end of the project each participant received a DVD which recorded their experiences undertaking new sports.

Case Study: GV Ethnic Professionals Association

The GV Ethnic Professionals Association was formed in October 2005 and is just one example of a welcoming strategy in regional Victoria. Recognition of the need to support skilled migrants and new arrivals in the region led to the organisation's development. The GV Ethnic Professionals Association emerged from a partnership between the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District and the City of Greater Shepparton. Part of its success can be attributed to the effective partnership between the two organisations. Membership of the GV Ethnic Professionals Association is open to anyone who would like to join.





As a result the association includes many new arrivals as well as members of the community who have been in the region for some time. A model of inclusiveness, the association also has members from the mainstream community in Shepparton. The association provides an array of services including mentoring, conflict resolution, cross cultural training in the workplace, advocacy and sessions on community strengthening. The association strives to create a welcoming environment and families are strongly encouraged to attend meetings. The GV Ethnic Professionals Association meets in the first week of each month and the informal environment provides opportunities for socialising, networking and a sharing of ideas, experience and advice.

Note: the material in this set of case studies is taken from:

A Guide to Welcoming Committees and Activities for Regional Skilled Migrants September 2006, by the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria

<http://eccv.org.au/doc/RMIFWelcomeGuide.pdf>.

