

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

BRMC

BRMC is a member of the Regional Multicultural Alliance Victoria (RMA Vic); a partnership of seven regional organisations supporting over 120,000 culturally diverse residents in regional Victoria.

BRMC is proudly part of the Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance; a partnership of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups who share a vision for safe, equal and respectful communities in the Grampians region.

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Acknowledgement of Country



BRMC acknowledges the Wadawurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, extending this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and recognise the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history, and their continued connection to the land and waterways.





About BRMC

For over 25 years, the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council (BRMC) has served multicultural communities across the Central Highlands and Grampians region.

Based in Ballarat, we are the peak multicultural body for the region, with membership including cultural and faith associations, community leaders, government and non-government organisations, businesses and individuals. BRMC works across three interconnected roles:

- connecting communities to each other and to the services they need;
- building the cultural capability of mainstream organisations and institutions; and
- partnering with government to influence policy and practice.

Our primary role is to strengthen communities, organisations and systems as a trusted connector, intermediary and capacity builder. We also deliver programs and services where they create meaningful outcomes and BRMC is best placed to respond.

Our programs and services span settlement support, children and family programs, education and learning, social support for seniors and socially isolated people, family and sexual violence education and navigation support, health and wellbeing, emergency management, cultural training, and community events and celebrations.

While our work is centred in Ballarat and the Central Highlands, our partnerships and funded projects extend our reach across the broader Grampians region, responding to the opportunities and needs of multicultural communities throughout the region.



Vision

A region where everyone belongs.





Purpose

We connect people, build capability, and influence systems so our region works for everyone.

Values

Inclusion - We work to remove barriers so everyone can participate
Responsiveness - We listen deeply and adapt to what we hear
Integrity - We act in the best interests of communities, always
Compassion - We recognise lived experience and lead with empathy
Sustainability - We build relationships, knowledge and systems that last

Chair Report

Dr Sundram Sivamalai



It is my pleasure to present the Chairperson's Report for the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council.

Our region continues to grow and change, with people from many different cultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds choosing to make Ballarat and the surrounding region their home. This diversity brings enormous richness to our community, but it also reminds us of the importance of ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to feel welcomed, respected, connected and able to participate.

Throughout the year, BRMC has continued to play an important role as the peak multicultural organisation for the Central Highlands and Grampians region. We have strengthened connections between communities, supported people to access services and opportunities, worked alongside government and community organisations, and helped build the capability of services to respond more effectively to our increasingly diverse population.

I am particularly pleased to see the strong relationships that continue to develop between our multicultural communities. Cultural festivals, community celebrations, Multicultural Community Leaders Catch-ups and many other activities bring people from different backgrounds together, not only to celebrate their own heritage, but also to support and learn from one another. These relationships are an important foundation for harmony and social cohesion in our region.

The breadth of BRMC's work this year has been significant. From settlement, health, education and support for multicultural seniors, to family and sexual violence prevention, emergency preparedness, culturally appropriate food relief and our growing Inclusive Practice services, BRMC continues to respond to changing community needs. Importantly, this work is built on partnership and on listening to the communities we represent.



The year has also seen important investment in BRMC's future, including the commencement of major improvements to the Ballarat Welcome Centre and the continued development of BRMC's regional engagement and professional services. Together, these initiatives strengthen our capacity to serve multicultural communities into the future.

On behalf of the Board, I thank our CEO, Suzanne Ryan-Evers, for her leadership and commitment throughout another busy year. I also sincerely thank our dedicated staff, my fellow Board members, our accountant, volunteers, funding bodies, partners and the many community leaders and cultural and faith organisations who work alongside BRMC.

Most importantly, I thank our multicultural communities for the trust they continue to place in BRMC and for the contribution they make every day to the social and cultural fabric of our region.

Our strength lies in the relationships we build across cultures and communities. I look forward to seeing BRMC continue this important work and remain a place where people can connect, contribute, celebrate their heritage and know that they belong.

Sundram Sivamalai
Chairperson



With Gratitude to Dr Sundram Sivamalai

As BRMC's founding Chair, Dr Sundram Sivamalai has been part of the organisation's story since its establishment in 1999.

Over many years, Sundram has generously given his time, experience and leadership to BRMC. He has helped guide the organisation through periods of growth and change, supporting its work with multicultural communities and strengthening its place in the Ballarat region.

As he steps down from the role of Chair, we acknowledge his longstanding service and the important contribution he has made to BRMC and multicultural Ballarat.

Thank you, Sundram, for your many years of dedicated service.



Treasurer Report

Uphar Chhabra

As in previous years, the annual accounts for FY2025-2026 have been prepared as general purpose financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. There have been no changes to the accounting standards that materially affect BRMC this year. Our Barkly Square lease has been recognised on the balance sheet as a right-of-use asset and lease liability since 30 June 2025, and its extension was recognised at 30 June 2026. This is why rent has fallen while depreciation and lease liabilities have risen.

FY2026 result

BRMC recorded an accounting surplus of $64,857 (FY2025: $38,865). Total revenue and other income grew 21% to $1.803m (FY2025: $1.487m), driven by grant revenue, which increased from $1.391m to $1.700m. Employee benefits expense rose 31% to $1.416m, reflecting a 3.5% award increase from 1 July 2025, the Superannuation Guarantee rising to 12%, and a shift to more staff-delivered activity, with payroll headcount rising from 22 to 32. Because more delivery was done by our own staff, program costs (bought-in items such as catering, venues, transport and materials) fell 18% to $186,399.

Understanding the surplus

Under the accounting standards (AASB 1058), some grants are recognised as income when received, even when the money will be spent on programs in the following year. At 30 June 2026, $132,402 of unspent grant funds was transferred to our Specific Purpose Funding Reserve (now $277,978).

Excluding this amount, the underlying result was a deficit of about $67,500, very close to the loss of about $66,000 forecast last year following the reduction in our core overhead grant. The two main drivers were administration costs no longer covered by grant funding, and slower than budgeted take-up of Cultural Competency Training in its first year. In short, the budget held, and the surplus is a matter of timing rather than funds available for general use.

Balance sheet and liquidity

Year-end cash and cash equivalents were $1,648,073 (FY2025: $1,136,396) and operating cash flow was $540,772. A material portion of this cash is restricted: contract liabilities (mainly grant monies received for services still to be delivered) were $892,905, including the full 2026-27 Disaster Relief Fund grant of about $332,000 received in May 2026, and a further $308,079 is held in reserves, including the unspent grant funds above and the $20,000 DFFH cash buffer. These funds must be delivered and acquitted against agreed outcomes. After setting them aside, unrestricted working capital was approximately $226,000, or around seven weeks of operating costs. Current assets cover current liabilities 1.46 times (FY2025: 1.65 times).

Net assets increased to $577,168 from $512,311 in FY2025. Because the increase was transferred into restricted reserves, our free reserve (retained surplus less property, plant and equipment) decreased to $253,096 (FY2025: $313,355).

Audit and compliance

The independent auditor, CountPro Audit, issued a clean (unmodified) opinion stating that the FY2026 financial report presents fairly and complies with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and ACNC requirements; auditor independence was also confirmed. The auditor commended management on the effective and orderly administration of the Association's finances. The audit raised one low-rated matter, high accumulated annual leave balances, which management is addressing. There are no open matters from previous audits.

Building a more sustainable position

As in previous years, the Board developed the FY2026-27 budget in light of the current grant environment, with a clear focus on moving BRMC to a more sustainable position. Compared with the projected deficit of approx. $66,000 in the FY2025-26 budget, the approved FY2026-27 budget projects a break-even result or a small surplus. Given the dynamic funding environment, a mid-year budget update will be prepared and presented to the Board if needed. This direction is reflected in our new Strategic Plan 2026–2030, which our CEO will present after the AGM.

The Board has also developed a Reserves Sufficiency Policy. We monitor our free reserves regularly against agreed levels, and if they fall below those levels, corrective action will be taken early. Together with regular reporting on our funding outlook, this means the Board is assessing BRMC's future position on a proactive basis, with responses ready should key funding risks arise.

Revenue mix and diversification

Grants remain the majority of our income, and we are consistently working to grow fee-for-service revenue, which reached $55,796 in FY2025-26 (FY2025: $43,398). Cultural Competency Training (CCT) is now in its second year. It is contributing to BRMC's revenue mix, but it is not yet where we want it to be. Shaped by local people with lived experience, CCT helps organisations work more confidently with culturally diverse communities, and we warmly invite these organisations to register. We are also exploring new ways for our community to support BRMC's long-term future, including a gifts and bequests program, and we look forward to sharing more with members in the coming months.

I would like to thank our volunteers, staff, partners, our CEO Suzanne Ryan-Evers and the Finance team, our accountant, Paul Tant, CountPro Audit, and my fellow Committee members for their stewardship and dedication.

Uphar Chhabra
Treasurer

CEO Report

Suzanne Ryan-Evers



The 2025–2026 year has been one of growth, opportunity and continued change for BRMC and the multicultural communities we serve.

Across Ballarat and our broader region, our communities continue to grow in size, diversity and confidence. We see their contribution every day; in our workplaces and schools, through volunteering and community leadership, at cultural festivals and celebrations, and in the languages, traditions, skills and experiences shared with the wider community.

There is much to celebrate. But we also know that not everyone experiences the same sense of welcome, inclusion or opportunity. Racism and discrimination, social isolation and barriers to accessing services remain very real experiences for some members of our communities. Global conflicts and events can also have deeply local impacts when family, friends and homelands are affected.

Against this backdrop, BRMC's purpose remains clear: **to connect people, build capability and influence systems so our region works for everyone.**

Connection at the heart of our work

One of the strongest themes for me this year has been connection; not simply bringing people together, but building the relationships and trust that enable communities to thrive.

Our monthly Multicultural Community Leaders Catch-ups continue to be an important part of this. I am enormously grateful to the community leaders who make the time to attend, share what is happening within their communities and raise concerns, ideas and opportunities. These conversations help us understand what people are experiencing and shape how BRMC responds.

Increasingly, we are also meeting communities where they are. Our partnerships have enabled programs and services to be delivered through community hubs, schools, cultural organisations, places of worship and other trusted settings rather than expecting people always to come to us.

At the same time, BRMC continues to bring communities together. Across cultural celebrations, seniors' activities, children's programs, community dialogues and our many partnerships, we see people from very different backgrounds forming friendships, sharing experiences and supporting one another.

For me, this is social cohesion in practice.

From supporting people to influencing systems

Another important development has been the continued evolution of BRMC's role.

While direct support remains an important part of what we do, increasingly we are also working to influence the organisations and systems around our communities.

Our growing Inclusive Practice work, including Cultural Competency Training, Cultural Conversations and the Diversity Speakers Bureau, is helping organisations better understand the experiences of culturally diverse communities and consider how their own practices can become more inclusive and responsive. Importantly, this work places lived experience at its centre and recognises the cultural knowledge of local migrant and refugee community members as valuable professional expertise.

Our emergency management work has developed in a similar way. By bringing emergency services and multicultural communities together before emergencies occur, BRMC is helping ensure that cultural and language needs are considered in preparedness and planning, while building trusted pathways for information when communities need it most.

The commencement of our two-year Multicultural Resilience Emergency Management Project in May 2026 is a significant opportunity to expand this approach across the Grampians region.

Building for the future

This year also brought an important investment in BRMC's physical home. The Australian Government's $500,000 investment in the Ballarat Welcome Centre has enabled long-awaited improvements to commence, creating a more functional, accessible and welcoming space for our organisation and communities.

At a broader level, our work through Regional Multicultural Alliance Victoria has become increasingly important. Together, Victoria's regional multicultural peak organisations are advocating for government to recognise and make better use of the trusted multicultural infrastructure that already exists across regional Victoria.

Regional organisations such as BRMC hold relationships, knowledge and community trust that have taken many years to build. In a period of funding uncertainty and increasing community need, protecting that capability and ensuring regional voices remain part of government decision-making will be an important focus for the year ahead.

Thank you

None of what you will read in this Annual Report happens because of BRMC alone.

I sincerely thank our Board for its stewardship and support throughout the year, particularly our Chair, Dr Sundram Sivamalai, and the members of our Leadership, Audit and Risk Committee. I also acknowledge our accountant, Paul Tant, for his valued support of BRMC's financial planning and oversight.

To our funding bodies, partners, volunteers and the many community leaders and cultural and faith organisations who work alongside us: thank you. BRMC's strength comes from these relationships and from the willingness of people and organisations across our region to work together.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge our wonderful BRMC staff.

The breadth of work reflected in this Report is extraordinary. Behind every program, partnership, community event, training session, referral and conversation are people who care deeply about the communities they serve. Our staff bring professionalism, cultural knowledge, compassion, flexibility and enormous energy to their work, often responding to changing needs and unexpected challenges along the way.

I am incredibly proud of what they have achieved and very grateful to work alongside them.

As we look to 2026–2027, there will undoubtedly be challenges, particularly around funding sustainability and increasing demand. But there is also enormous opportunity.

We will continue strengthening community voice, building the capability of organisations and systems, developing our regional reach and advocating for the investment regional multicultural communities deserve. Above all, we will keep doing what BRMC does best: bringing people together, building trust and creating opportunities for people from every cultural background to participate, contribute and belong.

Suzanne Ryan-Evers
Chief Executive Officer



Members of the Regional Multicultural Alliance (RMA Vic)

Executive Committee



Dr Sundram Sivamalai
Chair



Syed M Sami
Deputy Chair



Meeta Narsi
Secretary



Betty Mathew
Assistant Secretary



Uphar Chhabra
Treasurer



Dolma Tamang
Assistant Treasurer



Katrina Barquiel
Women's Affairs



William Diew
Youth Affairs



Jack Yang
Interfaith Officer



Binsu Baby
Community Representative



Sheilagh Kentish
Community Representative



Elangovan Shanmugam
Community Representative

Our Team



Suzanne Ryan-Evers
Chief Executive Officer



Teresa Azzopardi
Social Support Program Manager



Helen Bennetts
HR, Finance and Social Support Team Member



Annie Dunn
Business Development and Enterprise Manager



Heeyoung Lim
SETS, Family & Sexual Violence Programs Manager



Sangeeran Mithranandardajah
Emergency Mngt & Strategic Engagement



Tania Busse
Family & Sexual Violence Service System Navigator



Abrar Dham
Settlement Support Coordinator



Anusha Lakshmanan
Education Program Coordinator



Olabisi Oladele
Education Program Coordinator



Julian Cheung
Settlement Program Worker



Nyibol Deng
Settlement Program Worker



Caroline Parry
Social Support Team Member



Azra Alvi
Education Support Assistant



Harvinder (Siya) Jain
Family & Sexual Violence Project Assistant



Mary Deng
Bi-Lingual Storyteller



Fiona Marshall
Project Assistant



Kavita Sangavan
Bi-Lingual Storyteller



Xiaoqiu (Grace) Zhang
Bi-Lingual Storyteller

Community Engagement and Partnerships



As multicultural communities continued to grow across Ballarat and the broader Central Highlands, Grampians and Wimmera regions, BRMC strengthened its connections with multicultural and faith communities, government, service providers and other organisations across the region.

Throughout 2025–2026, BRMC engaged with multicultural communities across 11 local government areas in a region home to an estimated 24,600 people from multicultural backgrounds. The organisation worked directly with more than 30 cultural associations.

Strengthening Community Voice
BRMC's monthly Multicultural Community Leaders Catch-ups provided a regular opportunity for community leaders to connect with one another, share information and discuss issues affecting their communities. Throughout the year, guest speakers included the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which shared information about the Census; the City of Ballarat, which discussed its Intercultural Plan; Victoria Police Ballarat, which spoke about community safety; and Ballarat Community Health, which shared information about health initiatives, services and opportunities.

The catch-ups also provided an important avenue for community leaders to raise emerging concerns, identify opportunities for collaboration and highlight where further information, advocacy or support was needed. These discussions informed BRMC's ongoing engagement with government and service providers and helped ensure community perspectives were reflected in its work.

BRMC acknowledges the community leaders who generously contributed their time, knowledge and experience to these meetings, strengthening connections between communities and supporting the organisation's work across the region.

Multicultural Dialogues and information sessions provided further opportunities for communities and services to come together around issues such as community safety, the Census and emergency preparedness. These forums enabled community members to access information, ask questions and share their experiences directly with the organisations responsible for delivering local services.

Building Partnerships

During the year, BRMC worked with more than 50 service providers and organisations across health, education, family violence, emergency management and community services.

Through these relationships, BRMC helped bring multicultural perspectives into wider discussions about service planning and delivery, while strengthening connections between community members and the organisations that support them.

Keeping Communities Connected

Good communication was also central to strong engagement. BRMC's monthly newsletter grew to 824 subscribers, exceeding its target of 650, while social media messaging reached more than 5,000 people. These channels helped BRMC share information about services, opportunities, community events and emerging issues, while also giving multicultural communities a platform to share their own news, achievements and celebrations.

BRMC also attended, supported or partnered in more than 37 cultural festivals and events during the year, including Harmony Fest and Refugee Week. These events brought people together to share traditions, celebrate cultural identity and build connections across communities. They provided opportunities for people to learn about different cultures, strengthen relationships and foster a greater sense of belonging across the region.

Looking ahead, BRMC remains committed to deepening these relationships and creating more opportunities for multicultural communities to speak for themselves, influence local decisions and remain visible in the services and systems that affect their lives.



30+ Cultural associations and community groups engaged

50+ Organisations engaged across the region

Community Services



BRMC's Community Services support multicultural individuals and families across the region, providing practical assistance, opportunities for connection and pathways to essential services.

From settlement and early childhood programs to social support for older people, health and wellbeing, family violence prevention and emergency preparedness, our services respond to the diverse needs of communities at different stages of life.

Working alongside community members and partner organisations, we strengthen confidence, independence and wellbeing, while creating opportunities for people to connect, participate and belong.

Community Services in Numbers



154
Settlement Clients Supported

50+
Diversity Homework Club Students

220
Multicultural Seniors Supported

63
Family Violence Education Participants

25
Community Leaders in our Emergency Alert Network

300+
Multicultural Health Clinic Visits

Settlement Support Services

For people settling in a new country, understanding local systems and building community connections can be as important as finding a home, school or job.

BRMC's Settlement Support Services help migrants, refugees and eligible new arrivals build independence, access essential services and participate confidently in community life.

Through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, BRMC provides strengths-based case management, information and referrals tailored to individual needs. Support covers housing, health, employment, education, English language, financial wellbeing, parenting, legal matters and social connection.

During 2025–2026, SETS supported 154 clients, exceeding its target of 150, alongside 213 group-program attendances. All clients completed a comprehensive intake and needs assessment and worked with case managers to establish individual settlement goals, which were reviewed and updated as their circumstances changed.

BRMC strengthened referral pathways through collaboration with local health and education providers, the City of Ballarat, community organisations and specialist services. Closer integration between settlement and family and sexual violence support also enabled case managers to connect clients experiencing safety concerns with appropriate specialist assistance while continuing to support their broader settlement goals.



Settlement Support Services

Building Connections and Community Confidence
Alongside individual settlement support, BRMC's Welcome Morning Teas, Welcome Bus Tours and Intercultural Women's Friendship Group provided opportunities for newly arrived community members to build relationships, share experiences and become more familiar with local services.

The Ballarat Welcome Bus Tour was a particular highlight. Among 33 surveyed participants, approximately 97% reported increased knowledge of Ballarat, local facilities and services, and greater confidence accessing support independently. All participants said they would recommend the tour to others.

These activities complemented individual settlement support by helping participants establish local connections, access information and build confidence in navigating their new community.

BRMC acknowledges the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Cultura and consortium partners, together with the City of Ballarat, Ballarat Community Health, local health and education providers, the Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASSN), specialist family and sexual violence services, community organisations, volunteers and multicultural leaders whose collaboration enabled coordinated and culturally responsive support.



Finding Their Feet in Ballarat
When a newly arrived couple and their five-year-old son came to BRMC, they were navigating the challenges of settling in a new city. Employment, food security and social connection were among their immediate priorities.

BRMC's Settlement Services team connected the family with employment opportunities and referred them to The Salvation Army for food relief and practical support, including essential household items.

As the family began to establish themselves, the mother applied to volunteer with The Salvation Army, while their son joined BRMC's Diversity Homework Club to strengthen his English, develop confidence and build friendships.

Through coordinated support and community connections, the family began building a foundation for their new life in Ballarat.

97% Of surveyed Bus Tour participants reported increased knowledge and confidence

213 Group Program Attendees

Family and Children’s Services

Multicultural Playgroup
BRMC's Multicultural Playgroup provides a welcoming environment where children can develop early learning, language and social skills while maintaining connections to their home languages and cultural identities.

Through free play, craft, music, movement and shared activities, children develop social, communication and early-learning skills. Parents and carers can also build friendships, reduce isolation and access information about services relevant to their children.

During 2025–2026, BRMC strengthened its partnership with the City of Ballarat Community Hubs, delivering Playgroup activities through the Djila-tjarriu and Vickers Street Community Hubs. Bringing programs closer to where families live helped increase attendance and engagement.

Multicultural Storytime
BRMC's Multicultural Storytime brings children, parents, carers and grandparents together through bilingual storytelling, songs, movement and creative activities that celebrate children's home languages and cultural identities.

The program supports children's language development, early learning and wellbeing while helping families build community connections and become more familiar with local early-years and health services.

During 2025–2026, BRMC delivered 99 Storytime sessions across four programs: Multicultural, Mandarin, Hindi and Thok Naath (Nuer/South Sudanese), generating 807 attendances throughout the year.

Storytime activities were also delivered through the Djila-tjarriu and Vickers Street Community Hubs, helping families access the program in familiar community settings.



Family and Children’s Services

Multicultural Storytime incorporated practical health and wellbeing topics into sessions, including healthy eating, hygiene, dental health, emotional wellbeing, physical activity, body safety and preparing for kindergarten.

Maternal and Child Health nurses and other early-years professionals attended selected sessions, giving families opportunities to ask questions and learn about local services in a familiar and welcoming setting.

Feedback from participating families demonstrated positive outcomes. Among survey respondents, 85.7% reported that their children had become more comfortable with other children and group-learning environments. All respondents agreed that the program respected and celebrated their culture and language and that their child felt welcome and included.

BRMC also strengthened program quality through its partnership with Playgroup Victoria, with bilingual storytellers participating in facilitation training to build their skills in child-centred engagement, group management and culturally responsive delivery.

807 Multicultural Storytime attendances

99 Storytime sessions delivered



From Storyteller to Community Language Leader
For Nuer families raising children in Ballarat, maintaining Thok Naath is an important way to preserve connections to family, culture and identity.

Mary Deng, a South Sudanese early-childhood educator, recognised that local children had few opportunities to hear and learn Thok Naath outside their homes.

As a bilingual storyteller with BRMC's Multicultural Storytime program, Mary brought English and Thok Naath together through stories, songs and culturally meaningful activities. With support from BRMC, she developed her skills in session planning, bilingual storytelling and early-childhood engagement.

Mary's work soon extended beyond Storytime. Working with the Nuer community, she helped develop Thok Naath language classes for children and families. In 2026, with Victorian Government support, this initiative grew into a South Sudanese community language school teaching Thok Naath to children and adults.

Her journey demonstrates how supporting community members to share their language, culture and knowledge can strengthen community leadership and create opportunities for future generations.

Family and Children’s Services

Diversity Homework Club

BRMC's Diversity Homework Club provides free, culturally inclusive learning support for students aged 5–15 from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The program helps children strengthen their literacy, numeracy and confidence while creating opportunities to build friendships, develop social skills and experience a sense of belonging.

During 2025–2026, the Homework Club supported more than 50 students from 15 cultural backgrounds and 20 schools across Ballarat. Weekly sessions were delivered at Sebastopol Library and Ballarat Clarendon College, with 29 sessions held at each location throughout the year.

Through tailored learning activities, individual tutoring and group projects, students developed their reading, writing and mathematics skills while building confidence, independence and positive attitudes towards learning.

The program also provided opportunities for students to develop leadership and teamwork skills through collaborative activities and engagement with older peer tutors.

BRMC acknowledges the contribution of nine adult tutors and 15 peer tutors who generously volunteered their time to provide academic support and mentoring. The peer tutoring program, delivered in partnership with Clarendon College, provided younger students with positive role models while helping secondary students develop their own leadership and communication skills.

A key achievement during the year was continued growth in participation, with enrolments increasing by 4.31% compared with the previous year and attendance increasing across both locations.



Partnerships with local schools, health and community organisations also expanded the learning and wellbeing opportunities available to students and their families.

Alongside regular learning support, the Homework Club offered activities designed to strengthen children's wellbeing, broaden their learning experiences and encourage family participation.

Highlights included a STEM project with The Brainary, a First Aid Workshop with Ambulance Victoria, healthy lunchbox education with Ballarat Community Health, the Nurture and Grow gardening project, Harmony Week activities and Mother's Day and end-of-year celebrations.



Family and Children’s Services

Parent Education Workshops
Through the Diversity Homework Club, BRMC partnered with CatholicCare and Relationships Australia to deliver a series of parent education workshops focused on family wellbeing.

These workshops complemented the Homework Club's educational support by providing opportunities for parents and carers to access practical information and connect with local services.

Building Confidence Through Learning
When Abyan, a Foundation-level student, joined the Diversity Homework Club in January 2026, recognising letters and numbers was challenging, and completing learning activities required considerable encouragement.

Working with Abyan's family, the Homework Club team developed tailored literacy and numeracy activities focused on letter recognition, sounds, counting and number identification.

Through regular support and achievable learning activities, Abyan gradually became more confident and willing to participate. Tutors observed improvements in attention, independence and engagement, with Abyan learning to recognise most letters of the alphabet and confidently sound out simple words.

Abyan's progress demonstrates the difference that patient, personalised learning support and strong communication with families can make to a child's confidence and enthusiasm for learning.



BRMC acknowledges the Victorian Government's support through the Victorian African Communities Action Plan, together with the Collier Charitable Fund, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Ballarat Libraries, Clarendon College, Ballarat Community Health, Ambulance Victoria, The Brainary, CatholicCare, Relationships Australia and other program partners.

We also thank our adult and peer tutors, volunteers and participating families for their contributions throughout the year.

Seniors and Social Support

Throughout 2025–2026, BRMC's Social Support Program delivered 6,431 hours of group activities, helping older people from multicultural backgrounds remain socially connected, independent and actively engaged in community life.

Through welcoming, culturally inclusive activities and practical support, the program provided opportunities for clients to build friendships, maintain community connections and participate in meaningful social, cultural and wellbeing activities.

The program also promoted positive and healthy ageing, supporting physical, emotional and social wellbeing while helping older people maintain their independence.

Aged Care Navigation Support
During a period of significant aged care reform, BRMC continued to provide trusted, culturally responsive support to help older people and their families understand changes to aged care services and how they may be affected.

A significant achievement throughout the year was maintaining continuity, engagement and trust during considerable change. Programs were adapted in response to funding constraints and changing aged care requirements, while ensuring clients remained informed, supported and connected.

The voices, preferences and cultural needs of clients remained central to program planning and service delivery.

BRMC also continued to advocate for fair and sustainable aged care reforms and funding, including Support at Home and CHSP programs, ensuring the needs of multicultural seniors and the importance of culturally responsive service delivery remained part of the conversation.





Something to Look Forward To
Three years ago, an older woman came to BRMC feeling isolated, unhappy and reluctant to engage with others. At first, simply being in a room with other people was a significant step.

With time and regular participation, small changes became visible. Familiar faces became friends. She began joining conversations, taking part in activities and looking forward to the next gathering.

Before long, she was calling enthusiastically to book upcoming activities and rarely missed a program. Staff who had once seen her withdrawn now saw her smiling, chatting and taking an active part in the day.

Art and craft activities also helped her reconnect with her creative side. She proudly shared what she made with staff and other clients.

Most importantly, she told the team that BRMC's programs gave her "something to look forward to" and that she was "enjoying life again".

Her journey shows that social connection is about much more than attending an activity. A welcoming place, familiar people and a reason to get out of the house can restore confidence, create friendship and purpose, and bring joy back into everyday life.

Seniors and Social Support

Social Support Programs
Multicultural Tucker Lunch, Social Hub, bus trips and local outings continued to provide opportunities for social connection, cultural celebration, healthy ageing, education and community participation.

Client consultation played an important role in shaping services. Feedback regarding Multicultural Tucker led to trials of different delivery models and ultimately a return to larger gatherings, demonstrating BRMC's commitment to listening and responding to the people we support.

One of the program's most meaningful outcomes was what happened when people from more than 35 cultural backgrounds came together.

At a time of conflict and uncertainty in many parts of the world, these gatherings offered a powerful example of harmony at community level. People whose cultures carried complex histories of war, conflict and displacement shared a table, a conversation, a song or a celebration with curiosity and respect.

Through food, music, stories, traditions and shared experiences, difference became an opportunity for connection rather than division. Friendships formed across cultures, and participants discovered not only what made them unique, but also how much they had in common.

This spirit of inclusion, mutual respect and belonging remained at the heart of the Social Support Program.



Health and Wellbeing

Multicultural Health Clinics and Outreach

Accessing healthcare can be difficult for people who are unfamiliar with the Australian health system or face language barriers and other challenges accessing mainstream services.

The Multicultural Access Program (MAP), delivered in partnership with Ballarat Community Health, brings free, nurse-led healthcare and navigation support into trusted and accessible community settings. vaccinations in a welcoming community setting.



During 2025–2026, the program delivered more than 300 occasions of care to 255 clients through 35 nurse-led clinics and six weekend pop-up cultural clinics. Services included health screening, prevention, early intervention, treatment and support navigating the healthcare system.

The pop-up model took healthcare to places communities already knew and trusted. Clinics were organised with Thai, Nepalese, Chinese and Filipino communities, including a clinic at the Thai temple where interpreters were available on site.

This approach helped reduce practical barriers to accessing healthcare and gave community members opportunities to ask questions and receive care in familiar environments.

BRMC's annual Mother's Day vaccination clinic reached a further 121 people who were not otherwise registered with the program, providing access to more than 250 influenza, measles and/or COVID vaccines.



Health and Wellbeing

Culturally Appropriate Food Relief
BRMC's food relief initiatives provide practical support to multicultural families experiencing food insecurity, while recognising the importance of access to nutritious and culturally familiar food.

In 2025, BRMC launched a food relief project funded by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). In partnership with Foodbank Victoria, the initiative delivered more than 2,500 kilograms of food, equivalent to approximately 4,500 meals, to 25 families from 16 nationalities by January 2026. Building on this work, BRMC secured further DFFH funding in 2026 for a follow-on project in partnership with The Salvation Army.

The new project introduced a compact, supermarket-style pantry where families could select donated food that suited their needs and cultural traditions, providing greater choice and dignity.

Since commencing in April 2026, the program supported 28 families from 18 nationalities, with each household able to access groceries equivalent to approximately 35–40 meals per week, alongside other Salvation Army support services.

Growing Healthy Communities
Food is closely connected to health, culture, family and belonging, yet many multicultural residents experience difficulties accessing affordable, culturally important ingredients locally.

In April 2026, BRMC secured a VicHealth Growing Healthy Communities grant to explore the connection between food security, culture and community health.

In partnership with Food Is Free and BRMC's Diversity Homework Club, the project began planning four culturally focused food workshops involving 23 Homework Club families from 11 cultural backgrounds, scheduled for August to November 2026.

BRMC also commenced development of an interactive multicultural food map for our website. Guided by community survey data, the project aims to identify locally available culturally important ingredients, support local businesses and reduce the need for residents to travel outside the region to access familiar foods.





255 Multicultural health clients supported

28 Families supported through the new food relief project

Family and Sexual Violence Prevention and Support

Family and sexual violence can be particularly difficult to discuss or seek help for when people also face language barriers, unfamiliar service systems, migration-related vulnerabilities, visa dependency, stigma or fear of judgement.

Through the Family Violence and Sexual Violence Multicultural and Therapeutic Specialist Services (FV&SV MaTSS), BRMC worked to strengthen prevention, early intervention, referral and recovery pathways for multicultural communities across Ballarat and Ararat.

The program focused on increasing community knowledge and confidence, improving access to specialist services, strengthening workforce cultural responsiveness and building coordinated relationships between multicultural communities and specialist family and sexual violence services.

A multicultural family violence community forum and four information sessions reached 63 participants, including 59 multicultural community leaders and four service providers. These sessions created trusted spaces to build understanding of family violence, recognise warning signs and strengthen knowledge of where and how to seek help.

The sexual violence stream delivered five community engagement activities, reaching more than 63 participants. Approximately 70–80% of respondents reported increased awareness of local sexual violence services, while more than 80% found the information relevant and useful.

A key highlight was the shift towards smaller, discussion-based sessions. These settings encouraged questions and meaningful engagement around sensitive topics, while expansion into Ararat improved regional access to community education.

BRMC also delivered three Cultural Competency Training sessions to 58 practitioners, including 35 in Ballarat and 23 in Ararat. Participants represented specialist family and sexual violence services, police, legal, health and community service organisations.

Training strengthened understanding of migration-related vulnerabilities, cultural barriers, visa dependency, cross-cultural communication and culturally responsive referral practice.

BRMC's internal capability was also strengthened through role-aligned MARAM and AMES Family Violence Training for six staff and one Board member.





Family and Sexual Violence Prevention and Support

Strengthening Access to Specialist Support
In early 2026, BRMC established a Service System Navigator role to help close the gap between multicultural community members and specialist family and sexual violence services.

The role provides a culturally responsive point of connection for people seeking information and support, helping them understand their options, navigate services and access appropriate assistance through warm referrals.

The Service System Navigator also supports practitioners through secondary consultation, strengthening coordinated responses between BRMC and specialist services.

Two eight-session Women's Connection art therapy series, delivered in partnership with WRISC, engaged 10 multicultural women affected by family violence. Through creative practice, the program supported connection, expression and recovery.



Project Sitara Ballarat

With funding from the Ballarat Foundation Women's Fund, BRMC partnered with GenWest to deliver Project Sitara Ballarat, supporting 11 Hindi-speaking women through four face-to-face workshops and three Community of Practice sessions.

The project created a culturally relevant space for women to discuss safety, family violence prevention and community leadership, while strengthening connections and opportunities for shared learning.

Emergency Preparation and Response

Emergencies can affect any community, but people who are new to Australia, have limited English or rely on family and community networks can face additional barriers to receiving, understanding and acting on emergency information.

For multicultural communities, being prepared is about more than translating warnings. It involves knowing where trusted information comes from, understanding what action to take and having strong relationships with emergency services before an emergency occurs.

Throughout 2025–2026, BRMC continued to strengthen connections between multicultural communities and emergency services. The organisation represented multicultural perspectives at regional emergency management forums and Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees, helping ensure cultural and language needs remained part of emergency planning.

A key part of BRMC's approach was working through trusted community leaders. A closed emergency alert network of 25 multicultural community leaders received important information through familiar communication channels, enabling them to share warnings and preparedness messages through their own networks and, where appropriate, in language.

During the year, the network shared information about heatwaves, bushfires, severe weather, flooding and available emergency support. Weekly preparedness information reached more than 30 ethnic groups.

In December 2025, BRMC hosted a Summer Water and Fire Safety Information Session in Ballarat, bringing together 46 leaders from more than 20 cultural backgrounds with Ambulance Victoria, CFA, SES and Victoria Police.

The session provided practical information about summer risks and emergency response while building direct relationships between multicultural communities and emergency services. Leaders were encouraged to share what they had learned through social media, community groups, places of worship and personal networks, extending the reach of important safety messages.

BRMC also hosted a Building a Summer Safety Multicultural Dialogue in Stawell in November 2025, bringing together multicultural and faith leaders from the Northern Grampians area.

The dialogue provided an opportunity for community members to raise local safety concerns, identify information gaps and discuss barriers to accessing emergency information directly with service providers. It also gave emergency services an opportunity to listen and better understand community needs.

46 community leaders at the Summer Water and Fire Safety session

30+ cultural communities reached with emergency preparedness information

Emergency Preparation and Response

Multicultural Resilience Emergency Management Project

A significant development during 2025–2026 was the commencement of BRMC's Multicultural Resilience Emergency Management Project on 1 May 2026, funded through Disaster Ready Fund.

The two-year project extended BRMC's emergency preparedness work across 11 local government areas and began the development of emergency resources in five priority languages, together with a network of Multicultural Emergency Champions.



The project builds on an approach BRMC has already found effective: preparing before an emergency, communicating through trusted people and ensuring multicultural communities and emergency services know one another before they need to respond together.

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, BRMC will continue strengthening these community networks, building the confidence of Multicultural Emergency Champions and working to ensure emergency information across the region remains accessible, trusted and understood.







Professional Services



BRMC works with organisations, businesses and service providers to strengthen inclusive practice and improve access to services for culturally diverse communities.

Through Cultural Competency Training, Cultural Conversations, the Diversity Speakers Bureau, consultancy and partnerships, BRMC brings professional expertise together with the lived experiences of local migrant and refugee community members.

2025–2026 marked the first full year of BRMC's Inclusive Practice suite. Alongside supporting more culturally responsive workplaces and services, the program created opportunities for community members to develop skills and undertake paid work as trainers, facilitators and speakers.

BRMC continued developing an earned-income model to support the program's growth and reinvestment. This approach also recognises the professional value of lived experience and cultural knowledge, ensuring that community members are remunerated for sharing their expertise.

Professional Services in Numbers



640 Estimated number of people reached through Inclusive Practice activities

11 Cultural Training Faciliators and Speakers Recruited

20 Training and engagement sessions delivered

98% of survey responses rated the overall quality of training as Good to Excellent

Inclusive Practice

During 2025–2026, BRMC continued to develop and deliver Cultural Competency Training, Cultural Conversations and the Diversity Speakers Bureau, bringing professional facilitation together with the lived experiences of local migrant and refugee community members.

These programs reached organisations across local government, children's services, aged care, family violence and community services, helping them strengthen their understanding of cultural diversity and apply more inclusive approaches in their work.

In November 2025, BRMC held its first public Cultural Competency Training session, bringing together participants from education, aged care, family violence services and all three levels of government. Cultural Conversations provided further opportunities for service providers to explore contemporary issues, ask questions and reflect on their practice.

The Diversity Speakers Bureau brought local lived-experience perspectives into workplaces, services and schools. Speakers shared their stories of migration, identity and belonging, helping audiences connect broader discussions about inclusion with the experiences of people in their own communities.
BRMC also began co-design consultations to refresh its Anti-Racism Training curriculum, drawing on the expertise of facilitators and Diversity Speakers Bureau members.

Talking About Racism with the Next Generation
Ballarat Clarendon College invited BRMC Diversity Speakers Bureau members Abrar Dham and Daniel Acevedo to speak with more than 300 Year 6 and 7 students about migration, cultural identity and racism.

Through personal stories and an open question-and-answer session, the speakers encouraged students to consider different experiences of belonging and exclusion. Students asked questions ranging from the thoughtful and searching to the wonderfully everyday, including which football team the speakers supported.

The session demonstrated the value of giving young people opportunities to hear directly from people with lived experience in their local community.





Inclusive Practice



Bringing Cultural Competency Training Online
In 2025–2026, BRMC developed its first e-learning product: an online version of its half-day Cultural Competency Training program, funded by the City of Ballarat's Community Impact Grant.

Like the face-to-face training, the resource brings professional learning together with the voices and lived experiences of local migrant and refugee community members. Video stories from Diversity Speakers Bureau members form an important part of the learning experience, helping participants connect training concepts with real experiences.

The e-learning program was in development at the end of the reporting period, with completion and launch planned for 2026–2027. Once available, it will provide another way for organisations and individuals to access BRMC's Cultural Competency Training, including those unable to attend a scheduled face-to-face session.

Meet Our Inclusive Practice Team
BRMC's Inclusive Practice services are delivered by a team of trained Cultural Training Facilitators and Diversity Speakers Bureau members who bring together professional expertise and lived experience.

During 2025–2026, the team met quarterly through a Community of Practice to debrief, learn from one another and strengthen their practice. Activities included a dedicated session on Safety in Storytelling and consultation on the updated Anti-Racism Training curriculum.



Prachi Kathuria
Facilitator



Farid Bin Abdul Hamid
Facilitator



Daniel Acevedo
Speaker



Katrina Baraquiel
Speaker



Nyibol Deng
Speaker



Abrar Dham
Speaker



Anomo (Ruth) Lyomere
Speaker



Diana Paez
Speaker



Surya Pratiwi
Speaker



Kimberly Silva
Speaker

Acknowledgements

BRMC is grateful for the support we receive from our funding partners, stakeholders, members and community supporters

BRMC Funding Partners

Program Partners and Stakeholders

Regional Multicultural Alliance Victoria (RMA Vic)

A heartfelt thank you to our volunteers



BRMC is fortunate to have more than 40 dedicated volunteers who generously contribute their time, skills and experience to our organisation. From our Board members to those supporting programs, activities and community events, each plays an invaluable role in our work.

Through their generosity and commitment, our volunteers strengthen our programs, build connections, support multicultural communities and help create a more inclusive and welcoming region.

Their contributions make an enormous difference to the people and communities we work alongside, and we are deeply grateful for the care, energy and enthusiasm they bring to BRMC.

To all our volunteers, thank you for your generosity, dedication and belief in our purpose. We are incredibly fortunate to have you as part of the BRMC community.

Vale Georgina Vagg



BRMC remembers with great affection and gratitude Georgina Vagg, a remarkable champion of multicultural Ballarat, who passed away in May 2026 aged 89.

Affectionately known as “Madame Butterfly”, Georgina was a founding member of BRMC and devoted more than three decades to supporting multicultural communities. She served in numerous roles on the Executive Board and was instrumental in welcoming newly arrived families, supporting English language classes, organising community celebrations and fundraising events, and contributing to initiatives including the much-loved Multicultural Tucker program.

Georgina brought extraordinary energy, generosity and determination to everything she did, guided by her belief that everyone arriving in Ballarat should feel welcomed and valued.

Her enduring legacy lives on in the friendships she formed, the people she supported and the bridges she helped build between cultures.

Vale, Georgina.

Our Members

General Paid Members

Ballarat Rural Action for Refugees
Ballarat Nuer Community Group
Filipino-Australian Association of Ballarat
Chinese Australian Cultural Society Ballarat, Inc.
Ballarat Croatian Association
Ballarat and District Irish Association
Ballarat Indian Association, Inc.
Sri Lankan Australian Association of Ballarat
Ballarat Malayalee Association
Ballarat Hindu Temple & Cultural Centre
Ballarat Nepalese Samaj, Inc.
Centre for Multicultural Youth, Ballarat
Ballarat Bangladeshi Association, Inc.
Ballarat Interfaith Network
Ballarat Italian Association, Inc.
Wat Thai Bhavana - Ballarat Buddhist Centre

Individual Members

Dianne Hadden
Paul Tant
Meg Lee

Associate Members

Women's Health Grampians, Inc.
Ballarat Community Health Centre
City of Ballarat -Intercultural Services
Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services
Child & Family Services

















TOYOTA
BALLARAT TOYOTA
Serving the local community
since 1972
ONE WORLD ONE TRIBE

BRMC

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