

# Multicultural Action Plan 2023-2026





# Acknowledgement of First Nations People

Alice Springs Town Council acknowledges the Central Arrernte People, the traditional owners and custodians of Mparntwe/Alice Springs, and pays respect to their Elders: past, present and future.

Alice Springs Town Council Mparntwe-arenye mape itele-areme, apmere nhenhe Arrernte-kenhe. Anwerne akaltyirreme itneke. Anwerne arrwekelenye mape uthene apmereke-artweye mape uthene itele-aretyeke.

*Translation provided by the Alice Springs Language Centre.*

*Implicit in the development of this Multicultural Action Plan is the notion that our culturally diverse and socially inclusive community undertakes to work together for a united town that respects and values the contribution of all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island heritage.*





# Mayor's Foreword

***Alice Springs Town Council is proud to present the 2023 Multicultural Action Plan. As a Council, we are proud to serve each and every resident of Alice Springs.***

I love Alice Springs and I can tell you that it is a unique and wonderful place to live. That's exactly why my wife and I have chosen to raise a family here. From the welcoming people to the easy-going and fun lifestyle, there are so many reasons to love our town.

I have often said that there is a lot to love about Alice Springs, but perhaps my favourite thing is the rich culture we have. The Central Arrernte People are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Alice Springs and that culture touches every part of our community.

We also have such a multicultural community with people from many countries calling Alice Springs home. Approximately one third of our residents were born overseas, or have a parent that was. It's heart-warming to see people from different backgrounds and different beliefs come together and live in unity.



This I think is one of the true strengths of our town, and why I love it as much as I do. We have a wonderful mix of cultures from across the world that all work in harmony together. It really is a special thing to see.

This also means Council has a responsibility to ensure people from all cultures feel welcome and supported in Alice Springs. This Plan will provide strategic direction and guidance to Alice Springs Town Council to promote cultural diversity and social cohesion. It will also help improve access to Council's programs, supporting the participation and inclusion of all communities.

# 1.

## Introduction

Alice Springs or Mparntwe (pronounced 'M-barn-twa') which is the Arrernte word for Alice Springs is a unique and culturally rich modern town located in the heart of Central Australia. It is home to approximately 25,912<sup>1</sup> people with 20.6% of the total Alice Springs LGA population being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander<sup>2</sup>. Since settlement the town has welcomed people from a diversity of countries to make Alice Springs their home. At the 2021 Census, 32.9% or 8532 of the population were born overseas<sup>3</sup> and from 60 different countries.<sup>4</sup>

Alice Springs Town Council (Council) actively supports and celebrates multiculturalism in Alice Springs and strives to effectively engage with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups. Multiculturalism plays a key role in the character of Alice Springs being a welcoming and inclusive place and CALD communities make an important contribution to the Alice Springs economy, workforce, political, social and cultural participation and linguistic richness.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Alice Springs. Australian Government. [www.abs.gov.au/census](http://www.abs.gov.au/census)

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (1 July 2022). Northern Territory: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary. Australian Government. <http://www.abs.gov.au/articles>

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021).

4. MCSCA. (2021). Living and Working in the Red centre: Migrants in Alice Springs. MCSCA.





## 2. Alice Springs' Multicultural History

The traditional owners of the land in and around Mparntwe are the Central and Eastern Arrernte people who have lived here for tens of thousands of years. There is a strong Aboriginal presence and history in the surrounding hill lines and sacred landmarks. Grounded in the creation (altyerre) story these were formed by caterpillars, fighting dogs and beetles travelling in all directions.

A large waterhole, Atherreyurre (pronounce 'A-tuh-ree-oo-ra'), was named 'Alice Springs' in 1871 by the Government surveyor William Whitfield after Mrs Alice Todd, the wife of the man who attained the Government tender to build the Overland Telegraph line. In 1929 the town grew quickly once the Central Australia Railway (Ghan) was built and in 1933 the town changed its name from 'Stuart' after John McDouall Stuart to 'Alice Springs'.

One of the first migrants to Alice Springs were people travelling from the Middle East. People from the Middle East were hired to be cameleers by a South Australian pastoralist on a four-year contract, however many people married, had families and settled in the community. For more than half a century, brave cameleers made pioneering and settlement in the outback possible. There were two date palms planted in 1916 and a mosque built where the Alice Springs Town Council is now located. In 1993 a new mosque and Islamic centre was established in Larapinta and is now a place for worship and gathering for over four hundred people.





Yamini Gauba (left) and Store Manager, Gurdeep Singh (right)

## In Focus

Yamini Gauba first moved to Alice Springs in 2009 from Mumbai, India to live with her husband Ashish Batra.

She was very excited and at the same time anxious as she was leaving her home for the unknown.

"I came here because of my husband Ashish, who then was working at Kings Canyon and then he moved up to this beautiful town and that's how I landed here" she said.

"Moving here I realised there were very few Indians, so the sight of another Indian friend always made me happy!"

After over a decade in the Red Centre though, Yamini has become ingrained in the community and now owns two businesses in town.

"Living here, this town has grown on me and has given me opportunities and friends which I will always appreciate."

"Alice is such a multicultural town, it has people from everywhere in India from different communities. The Alice Springs community has welcomed everyone with open hands and has been supportive for their growth as well!"



### 3. Context

This *Multicultural Action Plan* aligns with the following core Northern Territory and Council plans and policies:

#### The Northern Territory Government's Multicultural Policy (2020-2025)

This policy acknowledges that multiculturalism is shaped by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, newly arrived migrants from all parts of the world as well as established multicultural communities. This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- » Valuing Our Diversity
- » Supporting Accessibility
- » Ensuring Participation and Inclusion

#### Council Strategic Plan- Alice Springs Liveability and Sustainability 2030

##### » Under Pillar One: Liveability

Develop and Implement a *Multicultural Action Plan*

#### Council Arts and Cultural Policy (2017-2021)

- » Diversity is one of the policy's guiding values.

#### Council Multicultural and Diversity Policy (2019)

This policy focusses on seven key areas. These policy priorities form the framework for the *Multicultural Action Plan*:

- » Community Harmony
- » Access and Equity
- » Consultation
- » Engagement
- » Advocacy
- » Diversity
- » Funding

The *Multicultural Action Plan* has been developed with the guidance of MCSCA (Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia) and we thank them for their time and contribution. We also acknowledge the participation of community members, especially those of the Alice Springs CALD community, a community representative from Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, Council staff and community service agencies in the consultation informing this plan.



## 4. ABS Data on Alice Springs



**250,635** <sup>(2022) 6</sup>

Total Territory Population

**25,912** <sup>(2021) 8</sup>

Alice Springs Population

**20.6%** <sup>(2021) 5</sup>

Population Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander

**32.9%** <sup>(2021) 7</sup>

Population of Alice Springs were born overseas

**29.8%** <sup>(2021) 9</sup>

Population of Australia were born overseas

**67.1%** <sup>(2021) 10</sup>

People were born in Australia

**3.7%** India  
**3.2%** New Zealand  
**2.7%** USA  
**2.4%** England  
**2.3%** Philippines

Most common countries of birth

**27.8%** <sup>(2021) 11</sup>

Households do not use English as their first language

**1.8%** Arrernte, nfd  
**1.7%** Malayalam  
**1.6%** Punjabi  
**1.1%** Tagalog  
**1.1%** Warlpiri

Other languages spoken at home

5. 2021 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

6. 2022 <https://nteconomy.nt.gov.au/population>

7. 2021 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

8. 2021 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

9. 2021 MCSCA Living and Working in the Red centre: Migrants in Alice Springs, MCSCA.

10. 2021 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

11. 2021 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>





Zak Deng along Lhere Mparntwe (Todd River)

## In Focus

For some, the journey to Alice Springs is straightforward. For Zak Deng, it took a little bit longer.

Born in Sudan, Zak moved to Egypt in 2008 before an opportunity to shift his life down under came about in 2009. It's fair to say he hasn't regretted his decision to move half way across the world.

"It's been a long journey (to get to Alice Springs), I had to travel from Egypt through sponsorship," Zak said.

"In 2009 I got a sponsorship to come to Australia. I lived in Brisbane for six years and I had to study the English language to be able to get a job. That was a big challenge but here we are!"

"My partner moved (to Alice Springs). She convinced me to move out here so I did and never looked back."

Now working as a Financial Capability Worker with Lutheran care, Zak now considers himself well and truly a Territorian at heart.

"One thing (I love) is the weather, the climate is beautiful," he said.

"Secondly, we've started a family and now have a family of four. My youngest one was born here so he's become a local! I love Alice, it's a beautiful place."

"In Alice, you get a lot of opportunities. You can move out here and get a job the next day if you're keen."



## 5. Methodology

The development and community engagement phase of the Multicultural Action Plan has four parts:

The Alice Springs Town Council initiated the following actions to support the development of the plan.



### 1) Focus groups with community members

The two focus groups targeted migrants and refugees which took place at MCSCA on Thursday 28th April and Saturday 30th April 2022.



### 2) Public Survey

The development and distribution of a tailored online public survey including 16 questions. The survey was live from the 18th April till the 11th June 2022 (8 weeks) with a total of 113 surveys received.

Migrants and refugee individuals and organisations were targeted to complete the survey while 59% of survey participants spoke another language at home other than English.



### 3) Review of local and state government actions

Previous and current Multicultural Policies and Action Plans by the Northern Territory Government and multiple Australian local governments were collated and examined.



### 4) Interviews with stakeholders

The four interviews were with professionals whom have a deep understanding of the Alice Springs specific barriers CALD people experience.



### 5) Meeting with Council Managers

The meeting was primarily to test emerging *Multicultural Action Plan* ideas and actions.



## 6. Action Plan

### Policy Principle 1: Community Harmony

Objective	Actions	Priority/ Timeframe	Responsibility	Measures
Proactively support and encourage the participation and visibility of migrants and refugees across Alice Springs, including opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange.	Continue to support and develop targeted multicultural programs and events such as Big Day Out in Harmony, Multicultural Movement Month and Citizenship Ceremonies.	High/Ongoing	Community Development/ Marketing	» Number of events and programs supported or facilitated – 10 percent increase each year
	Investigate opportunities to support other multicultural festival and events, including Chinese New Year, Diwali, Holi, Ramadan and Eid.	High/Ongoing		
	Increase visibility and community awareness, by continuing to promote relevant programs and events via Council's various communication channels, including the ASTC website, Council Connects and social media.	High/Ongoing		» Number of promotional posts – 10 percent increase each year
	Investigate opportunities to create Sister City relationships founded on the global Sister Cities movement.	Medium/ December 2023		» Report prepared for Council for its consideration
To increase feelings of cultural safety and belonging amongst migrants and refugees in Alice Springs.	Investigate the possibility of Alice Springs becoming recognised by the Refugee of Council of Australia as a 'Refugee Welcome Zone'.	Medium/ Ongoing 2023	Community Development	» Report prepared for Council for its consideration



## Policy Principle 2: Access and Equity

Objective	Actions	Priority/ Timeframe	Responsibility	Measures
Enable access and equity to Council services, facilities, events, communication information and promotional materials in order to support cultural maintenance and celebration.	Develop a strategy to provide access to additional community space to accommodate the needs of both multicultural and multi-faith groups.	High/ December 2023	Community Development/ Marketing/ People & Culture	» Development of strategy for Council's consideration
	Increase accessibility of Council website for CALD communities by improving navigation, increasing the use of Simple English and more translation options.	Medium/ September 2023		» Updated website, including more translation options as required
	Provision of regular training for staff and Elected Members with regards to: - Cross cultural communication (in addition to First Nations Cultural Competency training) especially for community facing roles - Unconscious bias	Medium/ Ongoing		» Number of training sessions held – i.e. at least two per annum
	Provision of free orientation sessions by Council for migrants and other new arrivals to assist with their transition and to ensure that they are aware of relevant programs and services offered by ASTC.	Medium/ Ongoing		» Number of sessions held – i.e. at least 3 per year

### Policy Principle 3: Consultation

Objective	Actions	Priority/ Timeframe	Responsibility	Measures
Ensure that the CALD community is meaningfully consulted in relation to Council planning and decision-making processes.	Ensure that Council works collaboratively with MCSCA, government bodies and non for profits (NFP's) to facilitate regular consultation mechanisms with the CALD community.  Ensure that all consultation is undertaken in an accessible and culturally appropriate manner to enable maximum engagement, including support for translators, advance notice etc.	High/Ongoing	Community Development	» Number of meetings held » Attendance/ participation by the CALD community
	Maintain regular communication with MCSCA to ensure the needs and perspectives of migrants and refugees continue to inform Council decision making, including the ongoing participation of a Council delegate as a non-voting member of MCSCA's Board.	High/Ongoing		» Number of meetings held/ attended

### Policy Principle 4: Advocacy

Objective	Actions	Priority/ Timeframe	Responsibility	Measures
Advocate on behalf of migrants and refugees who visit and live in Alice Springs to ensure access, equity and safety.	Work collaboratively with MCSCA and other NFPs to advocate to other areas of government on pertinent issues as required.	Medium/Ongoing	Council/ Executive	Advocacy undertaken



## Policy Principle 5: Diversity

Objective	Actions	Priority/ Timeframe	Responsibility	Measures
Acknowledge the strengths and opportunities which cultural diversity provides to both Alice Springs Town Council and the broader community.	Council to survey its staff with a view to ensuring that its workforce continues to reflect the cultural diversity of Alice Springs – i.e. people from CALD communities currently make up 23 percent of the population of Alice Springs.	Medium/ Ongoing	People & Culture/ Marketing	» Diversity of Council Staff is reflective of the local population
	Ensure Council utilises images that appropriately represent the Alice Springs CALD community for use in its promotional materials, fliers, posters and corporate reports.	Medium/ Ongoing		» Diversity of Council marketing material
	Actively support initiatives that serve to strengthen relationships and cross-cultural understanding by bringing together First Nations, migrant and refugee groups. Where possible, make resources available to enable such initiatives including the use of appropriate venues and/or participation by Council staff.	Medium/ Ongoing	Community Development	» Number of events and/or meetings held
	Develop and promote Council's Language Aides (both telephone and face-to-face) guidelines and support implementation.	Medium/ Ongoing	People & Culture/ Community Development	» Roll-out of Language Aides program within Council

## Policy Principle 6: Funding

Objective	Actions	Priority/ Timeframe	Responsibility	Measures
Maximise access and engagement with Council funding programs to support CALD group programs, events and activities.	Increase visibility and access to information about the Community Grants Program, including application support and training, in order to increase the number of CALD individuals and groups who apply.	Medium/Ongoing	Community Development	» Number of grant applications received from CALD groups

## 7. Plan Implementation and Review

The Alice Springs Town Council *Multicultural Action Plan* implementation will be led by the Community and Cultural Development team, however, will be a Council wide strategy.

The Plan will be reviewed every 12 months and have a significant mid-term review in late 2024.







Criste Evangelista at her place of work,  
Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia.

## In Focus

Moving to Alice Springs from the small island province of Catanduanes in the Philippines was a daunting proposition for Criste Evangelista. When she set off for the Red Centre in 1991, following her sister and brother-in-law, Criste had never even left her home country let alone been on a plane before!

It didn't take long for Criste to settle in the outback town, however, due to some familiar sights and some truly helpful people.

"I was so excited to be moving to Alice Springs. When the plane landed, all I saw was mountain ranges," Criste said.

"I remember driving through the town and there was nothing really in sight – it reminded me of home in the provinces. It was so good to reunite with my sister. I met a lot of good people from different migrant backgrounds through the Migrant Resource Centre."

After more than 20 years in the Red Centre, Criste continues to give back to the community through her work at the Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia. She is now part of the same group of people that helped her feel so at home here in Alice Springs.

"My favourite thing about living in Alice Springs would have to be how multicultural the town is," she said.

"The community is very tight knit and you really feel as though you are at home because everyone is so welcoming. There are so many different community groups from far and wide, who come together to celebrate multiculturalism at events like Harmony Day."

## 8. Key Terms

### **Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is a principle designed to promote and celebrate many cultures living alongside each other. The term emerged in Australia late 1960s to encourage migrants to retain aspects of their 'home culture' while living in their new community to cultivate a sense of belonging. Multiculturalism aims to ensure equal access to opportunities without people being disadvantaged due to their ethnicity or aspects of their culture<sup>11</sup>.

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)**

CALD as a term and acronym was introduced in 1996 in attempt to be more inclusive to individuals in policy discourse<sup>12</sup>. Academic research and Government reports use the term CALD while referencing migrant groups. Identifying features can include but are not limited to:

- » Family ties
- » Languages spoken at home
- » Country of origin
- » Cultural and religious background, and
- » Self-identification<sup>13</sup>.

By utilising the term CALD in this *Multicultural Action Plan* it does not aim to group unique cultures and societies together. The term is used to celebrate and embrace ethnic groups and individuals who differ from the English-speaking majority in regards to religion, culture, language, race, beliefs or values.

11. Balint P and Lenard PT (2022) *Debating Multiculturalism: Should There be Minority Rights?* Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

12. Sawrikar, P and Katz I (2009) How useful is the term 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) in Australian research, practice, and policy discourse? Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), University of New South Wales (UNSW), Aus.

13. Kanchan M, Madhan B, Stephanie S, Woosung S (2022) 'Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD): terminology and standards in reducing healthcare inequalities', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 46(1):7-9. DOI:10.1111/1753-6405.13190





*Syed Shahzeb Ali taking a break from his work at Waltja Tjutangkku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation.*

## In Focus

For some people it takes a lifetime to find their perfect home, but Syed Shahzeb Ali (Ali) has already found the place he wants to be.

Originally moving to Alice Springs for a job in 2018, Ali has quickly fallen in love with Alice Springs following stints in Darwin and Sydney beforehand.

A member of the Alice Springs Islamic Society, it took Ali no time at all to settle in to life in the Red Centre.

"It's been a really good experience here, we have a little community here in Alice Springs with the mosque here, which is the best part of living here," Ali said.

"We have no mosque for 1500km to Darwin and 1500km to Adelaide, this one here is the only one.

"As soon as we moved here we met everyone in the mosque, that's how I was introduced to the community and made friends. We have a really close-knit community, everyone knows everyone."

While he is involved in the Islamic community in Alice Springs, Ali is also entrenched in the wider Red Centre community as well. He is particular fond of the shorter commutes compared to his time in Sydney!

It's a quiet place to live, and from my place to work it's only a five-minute drive," he said with a grin.

"I've got everything here I need, it's the best thing for me to be in this town. The people are really friendly and welcoming too."



# Multicultural Action Plan 2023-2026

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