



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS



OUR PURPOSE

To provide innovative services to support, care for and celebrate culturally diverse individuals through their life journey.

OUR VISION

To empower diverse individuals and communities to reach their full potential.

OUR VALUES

- Inclusion
- Integrity
- Sustainability
- Kindness

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In accordance with the constitutions of Multicultural Community Services Geelong Inc (trading as Cultura), Geelong Ethnic Communities Council (trading as Diversitat) and Multicultural Aged Care Services (known as MACS) and funding legislative requirements, as the merger continues to take place, we are legally required to provide Annual Reports for each entity as it continues to trade in its own right. At this time of the merger process, no assets have transferred to the new entity Multicultural Community Services Geelong Inc (trading as Cultura). This report, therefore, contains specific financial and general information for the three entities.



cultura chair

**JOHN
HRKAC**



I am grateful to our CEO, Joy Leggo OAM, to the Board members, all our staff and volunteers, residents, service participants and families – and especially the multicultural communities of Cultura – for their exceptional work over the past year. It is truly inspiring to witness the enthusiasm they show as we devote ourselves to building a brighter future together.

In laying the foundations for Cultura, as an organisation and as a community, we have continued to grow over the past year.

At the foundation of Cultura is a core business model that enables us to continue our important work in the community, and to expand, so that, wherever possible, we can provide more support.

The merger of MACS and Diversitat occurred during the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, we were all learning about the extent and variety of services offered by both organisations and were striving to keep them going for our communities. Each organisation in the merger had its own foundations, and our desire was to blend the best of those into Cultura, through the underlying principles of value and integrity in what we do and in the services we provide.

Over the past year we have seen a sense of unity developing internally, as well as in connection with our external partners, through training and support of staff, and by uniting the best of MACS and Diversitat in terms of systems, processes and values. This is a credit to the management and staff of Cultura. Without a doubt, having similar values and an underlying belief in serving our multicultural communities – of which we currently have 51 – has made all the difference.

As in any merger, and especially during the pandemic, cashflow has been a challenge. While there have been some reductions in staffing levels, they were necessary and as would be expected with any merger. We continue to look at bedding down our services and processes as Cultura, so that we can be prepared for whatever the future holds.

"It is always a delight to see the smiling faces of new and existing residents, service participants, trainees and community members as they engage in our programs. We would like the broader Geelong community to connect, be inspired and embrace – as we do – the diversity of our multicultural communities."

Although the rest of the community has, for the most part, moved on from COVID-19 and it is no longer considered a pandemic, some of the risks remain in the context of our communities. Many residents and service participants of Cultura are vulnerable in terms of their health, and we continue to maintain our testing and mask-wearing restrictions to help ensure we can keep them safe. This strategy served us well during the pandemic, and we can rightly be proud of our approach. This success story is in no small part due to the shared and mutual vision and efforts across the organisation.

As the pandemic began to abate and Australia's borders re-opened, we refocused attention in other parts of Cultura to providing humanitarian support for new arrivals and welcoming new migrants to our community.



Across the sector, grants are increasingly difficult to secure. At Cultura around 80 per cent of our funding comes from government, so we are reliant on that support. With a solid cashflow, we will soon be able to reinvest in our services, and to look at adding new and different services across our communities. We are ready to look at new opportunities as they arise for Cultura. The future looks promising.





cultura directors

From left to right: John Hrkac (Chair), Dr Rajan Thiagarajan, Gail Perry OAM, Eldo Jacob, Deanne Firth, Dr Linda Sydor Petkovic, Gerald De Stefano, Spiro Fatouros. Absent: Tess Aberline, Gillian Costa, Sophia Shen, Zoran Dimovski

The annual report is a good opportunity for us to reflect on the year that has been and to celebrate the many milestones we have achieved together in the process of integrating MACS and Diversitat into the organisation of Cultura. It also presents an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the efforts of management and all employees, volunteers and teams who have contributed to the success of the merger.

Laying the foundations of a new organisation requires a deep focus on structure and culture, which together could be considered the 'soul' of the organisation. For us as a Board, culture is more important than bricks and mortar, and needs to be aligned with our Purpose, Vision and Values so that the organisation can achieve its goals.

At Cultura, over the past year, we have prioritised structure and culture by embedding our Purpose, Vision and Values into our goals and the policies, protocols and processes that drive our operations. By cementing the soul of the organisation in this way, we determine our success with and within the

communities we serve. This approach is already paying dividends by providing a stable environment for residents, service participants and their families, as well as staff and volunteers.

"Cultura is now developing an independent identity that combines the strengths of the two former organisations. As the organisation matures, the wholesome, 'family' nature of MACS is being unified with the care, kindness and community spirit that characterised Diversitat. This is truly inspiring to witness." - Tess Aberline

With these important foundations in place, Cultura is poised to deliver exceptional services that strive to be impactful and sustainable over the long term. Our core services are those that can serve people through all the different stages of their lives. It is important to set goals and to plan, but changes outside our control

can sometimes have an impact on our direction and outcomes. Recent examples include changes to aged care legislation, implementation of the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living. We are working to ensure that the organisation remains nimble, not only to clarify and grow the services we offer, but also to enable us to be responsive to change and to be able to take up opportunities as they arise.

One important aspect of growth is to be able to bring the community along with us, and in doing so, communication is critical. We have already established strong communication systems and ways to communicate with our residents, service participants and their families, with staff and management, with the communities that make up Cultura, and with the community at large. There is no shortage of information available to those who seek to know more about Cultura, the sector and our communities. We can be proud that Cultura is an open and transparent organisation.

As a Board, we are embracing diversity within our membership as we develop a strong and cohesive leadership group. It is important for every voice to be heard, and for our decisions to be clear, forward-thinking and justifiable. Over the past year, we have given our attention – individually and collectively – to building connections and gaining a deep understanding of the services we deliver as Cultura, as well as of the communities we serve and their needs. It is essential that we provide leadership centred on integrity, good governance and long-term sustainability, and as directors we have stayed true to that role by taking a considered, open and curious approach to all matters. Indeed, we are not afraid to ask the hard questions when required.

"Cultura is built on a strong foundation of mutual respect. The Board holds a high level of respect for the management team, for staff at all levels, volunteers, residents, service participants, families and the communities that are affiliated with Cultura. And we appreciate the respect we enjoy in return from the individuals, teams and communities across Cultura." - Gerald De Stefano

Cultura's emerging role in the Greater Geelong community is as a facilitator. We are forging an identity as an organisation that fosters connection, enables different communities to meet and engage, provides services to bridge identifiable gaps, and meets the evolving needs of all the communities we serve. To do this, we need to know what's going on, to engage with our communities at a deep level and get to know where things can be improved. We can be, and want to be, a valuable resource for the broader community, in addition to the diverse communities we already serve.

Cultura's path into the future will be focused on fulfilling our long-term vision of empowering diverse individuals and communities to reach their full potential. To achieve this, we will need to be flexible, adaptive and patient. With strength and courage, together we can face the challenges ahead and find solutions, not only to meet those challenges but also to exceed our own expectations.

"As a newcomer to the Board I have been astounded by the variety of services provided by Cultura, the level of services delivered under fairly challenging circumstances. Everyone I have interacted with across the organisation is genuine in the passion and care they bring to Cultura. For me as a clinician, that goes a long way in building trust and confidence in the organisation." - Dr Rajan Thiagarajan

Strong leadership, effective communication and a focus on the shared vision will be crucial in laying the foundation for our success. We will continue to work in partnership with wider communities in Geelong to shape Cultura, through our shared values as well as the various ways that we connect and celebrate diversity.

We recognise that it is a privilege to be able to assist people to live safe and fulfilling lives, and when the opportunity arises to be a part of this, we invite all members of the Geelong community to 'jump right in'. Our message to the Geelong community is that we are here for you: to support you, to meet your needs and to care for you. You can count on us.



cultura CEO JOY LEGGO OAM



This past year can be characterised as one of laying the foundations for Cultura.

The general managers have settled into their roles and have become closely familiarised with the intricacies of their areas and responsibilities. Some of the general managers have had long histories with either MACS or Diversitat, while others are brand new to the organisation and bring very different – and welcome – perspectives. Each general manager has approached their role in their own unique way, contributing to the laying of Cultura's foundations from the ground up.

A merger such as ours cannot be expected to be completed within a year, or even two years. Indeed, it is well accepted that three to five years is the optimal period for a merger that results in a united and well-functioning organisation. The past year has been about laying foundations, and the next two years will be focused on consolidation and breaking down any remaining silos, and creating an invisible wall model of service delivery.

Running a 24/7 organisation, as we do, requires a great deal of flexibility as well as a sound structure. We continue to explore options for embedding systems into the foundation of our operations. One of the challenges we face is how to smoothly integrate complex and specialised systems, such as data-warehousing for residential and medical information, which needs to be both accessible and secure. Another example is our registered training organisation (RTO), which has very specific needs for reporting, so we are looking at the best options for that – as we are doing in other areas as well.

At Cultura we often talk about innovation, and what this means is that we try to "look outside the square". To be flexible enough to meet the challenges we are

faced with every day, individually and collectively, across the organisation, so that we can meet the needs of our communities.

As we continue to embed our vision and purpose into the foundations of Cultura, there will be opportunity for me, as CEO, to spend more time with staff across the organisation, to share with them the values that drive me personally and that we have in common as colleagues. I am energised and inspired by the positive stories that staff take the time to share with me in person or via an email. At the Board level, we make time prior to every meeting to share what we call "purpose moments" – those positive, everyday occurrences that highlight and demonstrate how we are delivering on the purpose of Cultura, which is to provide innovative services to support, care for and celebrate culturally diverse individuals throughout their life journey.

Of all Cultura's values, I believe that "kindness" is the most obvious and effective way to form the type of organisation we wish to be. It's the bedrock for success in any difficult conversation; it enables people to be heard, to know that they are listened to.

At Cultura, and in Geelong more broadly, we have work to do with our new and emerging communities: to support them in developing the confidence to become formalised, incorporated groups so that they might be able to apply for grants; to engage and empower emerging leaders, and to showcase true diversity in the leadership of Cultura and other organisations like it.

Cultura is the largest provider of services for the multicultural community in our region and, indeed, in Victoria. Our strength is in placing our communities at the centre of what we do, listening and co-designing programs and services that meet their needs. As we

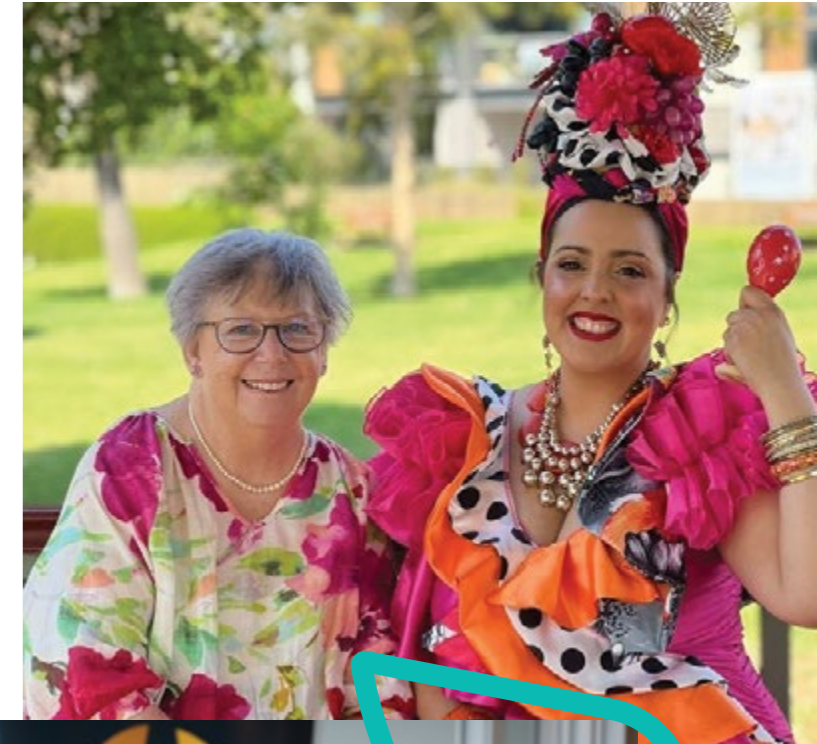


"At Cultura we often talk about innovation, and what this means is that we try to 'look outside the square'. To be flexible enough to meet the challenges we are faced with every day, individually and collectively, across the organisation, so that we can meet the needs of our communities."

look to the future – a bright future – we are striving for consolidation of Cultura, financial security and the building up of financial reserves.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous support, specialist expertise and enthusiasm of our Board members, who are all volunteers. Each and every director of the Board has been incredibly generous with their time during the merger, and many continue to work closely with our five committees, over and above their director duties. I have greatly appreciated their passion and energy over the past year.

Similarly, I would like to thank the staff and volunteers of Cultura who continue their hard work and dedication, day in day out and are the absolute bedrock of the organisation. We are the sum of all our working parts and with such a strong foundation we can look forward to tremendous future success.



cultura executive team



**LUBA
PRYSLAK**
RESIDENTIAL



**MATT
CONNELL**
**PEOPLE &
CULTURE**



**REBECCA
SMITH**
**COMMUNITY AGED
& DISABILITY**



**ROB
FRASER**
INFRASTRUCTURE



**CASEY
O'BRIEN**
**SETTLEMENT &
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**



**SARAH
FELSOVARY**
**CORPORATE
SERVICES**



There are six general managers, with responsibilities in settlement and community support, community aged and disability services, residential services, infrastructure services, corporate services, and people and culture. Together, they are focused on two of Cultura's strategic goals: to develop and operate streamlined and innovative business systems, processes and technologies, and to safeguard our sustainability and use our combined resources wisely, ensuring a high quality of service delivery to the communities /clients we work with. Creating these systems will enable us to support all of our service areas, meet the needs of the organisation and ensure we comply with funding requirements.

Over the past year, as a team, we have been laying the foundations by ensuring that programs and services that were formerly delivered by MACS and Diversitat are now clearly branded as Cultura programs and services. This means that our structures, processes and protocols now reflect the identity of Cultura; for example, through consistent service delivery to those we work alongside. It has been a good experience being able to combine the best of both those two "worlds" into Cultura.

We are pleased to see residents, clients and community participants – as well as staff – talking about Cultura, as opposed to the former organisations.

Our foundations are now firmly embedded in the organisational structure as we have come to learn about the different aspects, programs and services of Cultura, and that understanding has led to increasing collaboration and consolidation, and most importantly, enhancing what we already do. Building the culture of the organisation has been an important part of laying the foundation, through staff engagement. Along with the CEO, Joy Leggo, we have been communicating with staff about the vision for Cultura, explaining the new organisational structure and changes to how we now do things at Cultura, listening to what they have to say about what's working and what's not working. Sometimes new and innovative solutions are presented that enable us to do things better, and these are explored and adopted wherever possible.

Being part of a larger organisation such as Cultura is giving us access to a variety of services and expertise within the multicultural sector, and this is showing clearly in the beneficial outcomes for residents, clients and participants. We have explored ways to create linkages between services formerly provided by MACS and Diversitat, such as settlement services and employment. For example, several people who were formerly clients of the settlement services program are now employed in delivering residential services at Cultura.

In the residential space we have been focused on getting "back to normal" following the pandemic years. Occupancy rates and service levels have remained high despite the challenges of dealing with the pandemic. We can rightly be proud of our

record of keeping residents safe while providing them with good quality of life and the means to remain connected to their families and to each other during the lockdown periods and beyond.

There are an increasing number of new arrivals coming to Geelong given previous pandemic restrictions are no longer a significant challenge in settling these individuals and families. Numbers settled within our Community Support Program are high with 175 individuals (126 from Afghanistan and 49 from Arabic speaking communities) being settled in the past 12 months. Our Humanitarian Support Program settles between 25 and 30 people per month on average. Excellent support has been provided by our employment services program to job seekers both prior to and in some cases post their employment, with employment services being strongly supported in this regard by our pre-accredited courses provided by the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) service. Recent funding cuts by State Government has resulted in the loss of two of our key employment programs with significant effort currently occurring to obtain funding from alternative sources to ensure we continue to provide comprehensive service delivery to multicultural communities, in order to meet their employment needs.

Our community development focus continues to be on offering a range of innovative community development initiatives based on community need, spanning family violence, mental health, youth work and community capacity building across our locations in Norlane and Colac.





We have implemented a new system to put all staff on a single payroll system and we have had to write a new policy for just about every area related to employment at Cultura. Practically speaking, this was a massive undertaking that has also helped to consolidate the desire to be a unified organisation. A lot more work is needed in this area, but the foundations have been laid and we are pleased with our progress.

The past year has presented challenges, operationally and financially. However, we have made significant inroads to make up the deficit of the previous years, and this bodes well for the safeguarding of Cultura's sustainability into the future. In the service delivery areas, including the training side of the organisation, we have been looking very closely at how to streamline processes and systems, finding efficiencies wherever possible. As part of our ethos of continuous improvement we will keep finetuning the products and service delivery in the coming months and years, but the real solid work has been done to put those structures in place. This has given us a great sense of achievement, even as we acknowledge that more work is needed.

Fundamentally, we are focused on the residents, clients and communities we serve, and ensuring that we deliver with Cultura's values at the fore of everything we do. The name "Cultura", which is clearly recognisable in many languages, reflects that culture and diversity are at the core of who we are as an organisation and a community.

As an organisation, we have moved from reacting to new situations and challenges to a more proactive stance, and that is tremendously encouraging. It is clear from the foundations we have put in place over the past year that as an organisation we are moving forward, and that is a positive outlook for the future. In time, we will be able to look from the vantage point of our foundations, towards growth and the opportunities that are ahead of us.

Cultura offers our communities a range of experiences and services across their lifespan. We deliver a whole-of-life program across acute services, family services, aged care, employment, training and several other areas. We are now a specialist organisation with a high level of expertise across these areas, and it is already evident that

Cultura today is stronger together than the individual organisations ever were on their own.

We can already see, with a degree of hindsight, part of the journey we have been on to become one organisation, and we have much to be proud of. Evidence of the organisation's strong culture and leadership is already showing in the achievements of the past 12 months. The people who work here have a strong passion for our clients and our purpose; everyone is here for the common course of Cultura and what it represents. Staff have told us they feel they have a voice in the way that Cultura changes, and we've built a support structure that seems to be working.

We are set up to do good things. As members of staff, management and leadership of Cultura, everyone lives our values in the kindness and integrity we bring to our work. As a team, we appreciate the support of the Board and all staff and volunteers, and we acknowledge their hard work during the changes and challenges of the merger. We would like to express our gratitude to our dedicated volunteers who selflessly contribute their time and effort to help us achieve our common goals. We are proud of every single person in the organisation. No doubt, more challenges are ahead, but we are ready to meet them, together. As the organisation matures, we would like the broader community to recognise Cultura as open to all, and invite conversations about where we might assist, collaborate and build capacity.





39%
OF PEOPLE COME
FOR THE
PARADE

96%
OF ATTENDEES
ENJOYED THE
ATMOSPHERE OF
THE EVENT

PAKO FESTA



Pako Festa is the largest free celebration of cultural diversity in Australia, celebrating community spirit, interconnectedness, belonging and harmony. The street festival is accessible to all who want to share the enriching experience of Australian multiculturalism, with over 100,000 people in 2023 contributing to the community cohesion needed so much in today's world.

Pako Festa returned to Pakington Street in February after a two-year hiatus due to Covid. The festival is a vibrant celebration of diversity and community, with colourful costumes, lively music, energetic dance performances, and delicious food representing rich cultural heritage of the region and beyond. This is a unique festival that provides an opportunity to experience the diversity of various cultures in one place, with participants showcasing their unique traditions and customs.

Whether you are a first-time visitor or a long-term resident of Geelong, Pako Festa is an unforgettable celebration of community and diversity. With something for everyone, it's no wonder this festival has become a beloved staple of the region's cultural

"It was so good to see people gathering, celebrating and congregating again. There was a really amazing vibe and connectedness and everyone was happy and smiling! It was great."
- Pako Festa attendee

calendar for 41 years. One of the best things about Pako Festa is that people from all backgrounds and ages come together to enjoy the festivities.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our 2023 Pako Festa Parade winners:

Most Culturally Aware – Chinese Association of Geelong

Most Innovative use of theme 'Sharing and Connecting Cultures' – Wathaurong Co-op

Best Musical Entry – Indonesian Association of Geelong

Best School Entry – Greek School Hellenic of Geelong

A huge thanks to all our event partners for their important contribution, Pakington Street Traders and our MCSG Communities!

Pako Festa is delivered by Cultura and supported by State Government, City of Greater Geelong and the following Community Partners: Xtreme Technology, TAC, Adroit Insurance & Risk, The Gordon, WorkSafe and Barwon Water.

Joy Leggo OAM, Cultura CEO says: "This year's event reminded us of the beauty of our differences and the power of unity. We've currently planning for next year's event. Hope you will all join us on the 24th February, 2024 in what will be an even bigger and better Pako Festa."

"Honestly everything that was there is everything I hoped for. It was beautiful and inclusive. Seeing my home country being included made my heart melt with happiness. I absolutely love Pako Festa for this reason. It helps me to open my eyes to my own culture and others."
- Pako Festa attendee

74
NET PROMOTOR
SCORE (NPS)







volunteers at cultura

At Cultura, we are fortunate to enjoy the support of volunteers across a wide range of areas.

In Residential, we have volunteers who assist the Wellbeing Team in setting up and delivering activity programs or assist in the kitchen. The residents' activity plan provides a selection of daily recreational pursuits, such as bowling or bingo. The volunteers provide companionship by sitting down for a chat with residents or taking them out for a walk, or reminding residents of activities on offer. Other volunteers help in the Boutique, our opportunity shop. Stella's café, which is open seven days a week, is staffed entirely by volunteers. We also have volunteers who assist in caring for our gardens, and others who take residents on outings using the trio-bike taxi.

The Community Visitors Scheme is a government-funded program that finds, screens and selects volunteers to visit clients in their homes. This is a critical role in helping to support older people who are living independently in the community and who may feel isolated and lonely. The volunteers are matched with clients and usually visit once a week to share an activity, such as a chat over a cup of tea, going out for a coffee, playing scrabble, cooking or gardening.

At The Pulse radio, new volunteers are often too shy to go on air, but they are keen to assist with production and other support tasks. Over time, they gain confidence to go on air, to conduct interviews and help to present the programs. In this way, the radio station supports the development of both communication and confidence in volunteers, who in turn provide the passion and energy needed to



keep the station going. The training program, which is mandatory for anyone going on air, encourages new volunteers to pair up with an experienced volunteer who can assist them to learn about their area of interest. For example, a new volunteer who is keen to assist with a music program might be paired with the presenter of a music program and gain experience in producing a music program.

In the Settlement program, we work with new arrivals, newcomers to the area and vulnerable people in the community. From their first arrival in Australia, migrants are provided with services to help them settle into the Australian lifestyle as well as into the local community. The needs of new arrivals can vary greatly. Some need help to learn or practise their English, obtain a driver's licence, learn parenting skills or gain confidence as they settle into the new cultural environment. Our greatest need for volunteers in this program is the role of local guide: showing people how to navigate the neighbourhood and use our public transport system, helping them to get around, enjoying conversations that help people to practise their English-language skills. Many clients of the Settlement program become volunteers at Cultura; they are keen to "give back" and many gain valuable skills that can open doors to future employment.

The Healthy Living Centre provides social support for older members of the community who want to come in for the day – those who need assistance are collected from their homes with our bus. The program is scheduled to offer a range of inside activities and

outings as well as morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, with a focus on socialising. We need volunteers to assist with all these activities, as well as to drive the buses on outings and to transport people to and from their homes.

We would like to invite people who are interested in volunteering at Cultura to get in touch. Our volunteers often talk about how much they personally get out of the experience – this might be gaining skills in hospitality, gardening or personal care, or the deeply personal satisfaction of having assisted someone in need. Every volunteer makes a difference. We provide training and support so that volunteers can find their "best fit" within the organisation. Some new volunteers like to try out different areas before they settle on a position, while others are very clear about the kind of volunteer work they would like to do.

Ilaria Carini, Volunteer Coordinator – Residential
Nina Chegini, Volunteer and Resident Feedback Coordinator – Settlement & Community Services
Amanda Natai, Volunteer Coordinator – Community Visitors Scheme
Leo Renkin, Manager, the Pulse Radio



community engagement

Engagement is a planned process of working with communities and stakeholders to inform decisions, strengthen relationships and share knowledge.

The Cultura Engagement Framework is our public commitment to developing and maintaining relationships with the diverse individuals and communities we encounter through the programs and services we deliver. This commitment is driven by our values of *Inclusion, Integrity, Sustainability* and *Kindness*.

The Cultura Engagement Framework is the culmination of a considerable body of work undertaken over the past year, to lay the foundations for a formal, structured and planned focus for

engagement. It has been developed through a consultative process – commenced in December 2022 and concluded in March 2023 – led by members of Cultura's Board and senior leadership team, with the support of Capire Consulting Group.

The consultation included a survey, which received 365 responses, and 3 focus groups involving members, staff and volunteers of Cultura, as well as residents, clients, family members, students, service providers, delivery partners and government agency representatives. The feedback demonstrated that Cultura enjoys a high level of trust and a strong reputation for valuing and understanding its communities.

At Cultura, engagement takes many forms, including formal approaches and events as well as informal and day-to-day-interactions. Aligned with Cultura's strategic goals, the Framework will inform how



we make decisions, develop relationships and share knowledge. In decision-making terms, this means providing opportunities for individuals and communities to influence Cultura's strategic direction and to provide feedback on programs and services that meet their needs. The development of strong relationships means creating connections across communities, listening to queries and concerns, and responding to them in ways that help people to feel heard. Sharing knowledge and information means listening, to understand the lived experiences of individuals and communities and to build the capacity of clients, participants and communities within Cultura.

Over the coming year, we will be working to ensure a consistent approach to exploring the purpose and scope of engagement. Understanding who needs to be engaged and the most appropriate activities for different types of engagement are important aspects of this forthcoming work.

Another focus is to embody the culture of the organisation through a skilled and diverse workforce and leadership team. Our systems and processes for data collection, storage, access and knowledge management will be used to support the goal of operating streamlined, innovative business systems, supported by frameworks for good governance, compliance with legislation, clinical guidelines, quality and safety regulations, risk management, and diversity and inclusion.

At Cultura, everyone is responsible for community



engagement in some way. We are committed to continuous improvement in how we engage with individuals and communities, and we are looking towards a future in which we can build a strong understanding of our communities to ensure that we elevate their voices and meet their needs.





cultural diversity report

Our records show that 80 different nationalities are represented in the Cultura community, including residents, service participants, volunteers and staff. In 2021 this figure was 70, which suggests that the task of engaging emerging communities that require our services is increasing and ongoing. A significant proportion of staff and volunteers speak languages other than English, and many are multilingual.

Cultural diversity at Cultura closely resembles the national averages; for example, the more established communities are Italian, Croatian, Dutch, Lithuanian, Spanish, Macedonian, while the new and emerging communities are, Filipino, Indian, Sudanese, Vietnamese and Karenni.

A task earmarked for next year is to explore gaps in staffing and volunteers to support emerging communities requiring services and to ensure strong representation of staff with lived experience working at Cultura. This will tie in with our work to improve cultural awareness across the organisation, including employment of a Cultural Awareness trainer. Our goal is to support the many different nationalities we represent and to respond to their stated needs, while ensuring that the voices of the smaller communities are also heard.



international women's day

Worldwide, the theme for International Women's Day 2023 was *#EmbraceEquity*.

At Cultura, we invited everyone to focus on gender equity as a part of valuing true inclusion in society and in workplaces.

The Community Development Team coordinated the day's celebrations, which were led by the women of Cultura and held at the Northern Community Hub. We were delighted that a representative from Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative was able to open the event with a traditional smoking ceremony. Interpreters were on hand to explain the purpose of International Women's Day in different languages.

The day included hands-on activities, such as henna painting and making bracelets with multicoloured beads, singing, dancing, a fashion parade and a video presentation on human rights in Australia.

Not surprisingly, there was a wide array of delicious foods representing many of the cultural backgrounds at Cultura: a range of breyanis, samosas and curries, baklava, burek (Afghan version) and many more.

The fashion parade featured traditional costumes from many different cultures, and there was music to accompany traditional dances from different countries in Africa, as well as Macedonia, India, Arabic countries and the Karenni community.

The English-language students sang a song ("Room to Grow"), and later everyone sang "I Am Woman", the famous anthem written by Australian musicians Helen Reddy and Ray Burton in 1971.

Although it was an informal event, we were pleased to host representatives from the City of Greater Geelong, Victoria Police and other community organisations.



refugee week

The theme of "Finding Freedom" is the theme of Refugee Week for the years 2023–2025. The Refugee Council of Australia, which coordinates the event nationally, chose this theme to raise awareness of issues affecting refugees, to promote harmony and togetherness, and to act as a reminder that, regardless of our differences, we all share a common humanity.

At Cultura, we worked together to create an event that all service participants could enjoy, from the wide range of refugee communities represented, and across age groups. Staff and volunteers who themselves came from refugee backgrounds worked with others from across the different parts of Cultura to consult with communities about the kind of event that could be held.



The result was a spectacular, inclusive and happy morning that involved more than 150 attendees. A young Arabic-speaking woman gave an inspiring speech about the experience of being a refugee and coming to Australia, and other speakers talked about what finding freedom means and the complexities of becoming a refugee and seeking asylum away from your home country. The speeches were interpreted into 6 languages.



ACFE (Adult, Community & Further Education) students sang a song about being united in the world, a group from the Karen & Karenni elder community sang a song in their traditional language, and there were dancers and instrumental performers to accompany them.

Barwon Health provided staff for a stall with information about health services available to refugees. The popularity of this initiative indicates that this is something to explore next year with other community service providers. A manufacturing organisation generously provided all attendees with a small gift box to take home.

A video presentation included photos and written statements about what finding freedom means for a refugee, and provided information for those not familiar with the issues faced by refugees. We finished with a delicious morning tea featuring treats from many different cultures.

"On behalf of Cultura, I want to say a big thank you to our refugee communities. You all show us how strong you are and inspire us to be better and try harder. Your pursuit of freedom strengthens our commitment to a world filled with compassion and inclusivity. Let's stand together, united in our vision to create a world where everyone can find the freedom they so rightly deserve. To all those who've come from far and wide, We're happy you're safe. We're happy you're free. We're happy you're here." - Rebecca Smith, Acting CEO of Cultura

At Cultura, we have learned that finding freedom means taking chances, celebrating our differences and remembering that we are all human.



the pulse radio

by Leo Renkin, Manager

The Pulse is the community radio station for Geelong and the Surf Coast, though our signal goes all the way up the coast to Lorne, across to Ballarat and the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Things were difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many presenters unable, or unwilling, to attend the studio to broadcast their programs. Some were able to be given access to broadcasts from their homes, but many programs had to be put on hold during the lockdown periods. In addition, the schools training program had to close.

A positive contribution to the broader community during the pandemic was a request by the local council for the Pulse to broadcast directly into public housing apartment buildings that were under strict lockdown in Melbourne. As a result, families unable to leave their homes were able to access news and information in their ethnic languages.

We broadcast 67 different programs each week, with about 12 of those produced by volunteers from different ethnic language communities. There are talkback programs, music programs and specialist programs covering the arts, sports and other topics of interest. One of our newest programs, Loretta's Front Page – a news and current affairs program that has a strong focus on women's health, their stories and issues that affect them – has recently

celebrated its first birthday. We produce a weekly program supporting the GDFL, which is the region's Australian rules football league, as well as outside broadcasts to support causes such as fundraising for cancer – the Biggest Morning Tea is a good example – and other issues of concern and interest to the broader community.

The outside broadcasts provide a good vehicle for us to engage directly with communities. Over the past year, in addition to the Biggest Morning Tea (which was actually an afternoon tea), we have broadcast from the community house at Torquay, from Pako Festa, Ocean Grove and many other events associated with community groups.

This regular involvement gives us a strong indication of the extent and reach of our community engagement. Understanding the needs of the community is important in planning programs and other initiatives, seeking funding support, training staff and volunteers, and justifying the renewal of the station's licence every five years.

As a digital broadcaster, our programs reach beyond Australia's borders, and some of our programs are popular outside the main broadcasting footprint. For example, our weekly program in the Croatian language is popular in Croatia – in fact, a few years ago we won an award from the Croatian government for our services to the Republic, and when the president of Croatia visited Australia, she presented us with the certificate that we have proudly hung in the office.

We are always on the lookout for people willing to produce programs in different languages, so that we can continue to offer an array of broadcasts that reflect the ethnic diversity of our region.



cultura training



The RTO is the foundation of Cultura's training program, and now that the organisation has been registered with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), we are ready to launch into the next phase. This will be expanded to offer training programs in aged care and for new arrivals in the first instance, and to take up opportunities in this space as they arise.

Cultura already offers cultural awareness units in the registered training organisation (RTO), in the aged care, disability, community and childcare qualification courses. These are 12-month diploma and certificate III courses, which are nationally accredited. This means that the federal government sets the standards and curricula for these courses, including an elective, 8-week cultural awareness unit. These courses are the Diploma in Counselling; the Diploma in Early Child Care, which includes up to 120 hours of work placement; the Certificate III in Individual Support, which combines aged care and disability; and the Certificate IV in Disability. The Cultural Awareness unit is a requirement of the Certificate III in Community Services and the Diploma in Community Services courses, both of which involve up to 200 hours of work placement. Students are supported into work placements with partner organisations, including those offering multicultural services, and often into permanent work as well.

Classes are held face-to-face, which has been a wonderful return following the pandemic, and enables the one-on-one support that is so critical in working with multicultural communities. Many of our courses are supported by government grants, in recognition of their importance to addressing shortages in the skilled workforce in the Barwon region, particularly in aged care, disability and childcare. This is an important recognition that many

people seeking training and qualifications are not be able to afford course fees. In addition, our team is on hand to offer individualised support with the application process as well as a pre-training review to assess what help is needed and the person's goals for future employment and volunteering. The Adult, Community and Further Education programs offer longer-term pathways, with opportunities for people to develop their English-language skills and build up to further education, training and employment.

The RTO has strong partnerships with schools and organisations, to support traineeships in childcare, aged care and other work environments. Childcare centres are an important source of referrals, as many parents placing their children in childcare are seeking to return to work after the parental care period or are looking to retrain into the caring professions. Organisations that provide employment services are interested in working with Cultura to support individuals into training and employment.

Cultura's onsite and online training will be available from next financial year and will work with organisations and workplaces to assess and address their needs regarding cultural awareness and what they would like to achieve. The aim is to develop ongoing relationships and support for continuing the work of raising cultural awareness.

We will also be working on financial sustainability of the RTO, building new partnerships and maintaining existing partnerships, and cementing our reputation in the community as a provider of quality, specialised education and training in the care sector and for the multicultural community. We are excited to be able to provide this important service delivery for the broader Geelong community, and to support people into education, training and employment.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES GEELONG INC. ABN 71 355 229 834 FACTS ABOUT FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Multicultural Community Services Geelong was incorporated on the 10th of December 2020 under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

Our thanks

As Multicultural Community Services Geelong Inc t/a Cultura establishes the entity, we appreciate the valuable contribution of our directors, staff and volunteers. As a not for profit organisation, it is our aim, once established, that all surpluses are used to further our vision and purpose. We value the continued support from our community. Our combined effort will assist our strategic development to expand the services we can offer.

	2023	2022*
Our Financial Performance		
Income	12,121,050	2,004,499
Expenses	14,256,430	2,004,499
Total Income	(2,135,380)	0
Our Financial Position		
Total Assets	2,046,940	1,440,266
Total Liabilities	4,182,320	1,440,266
Net Assets	(2,135,380)	-
Our Board		
Composition	10	11
All directors are independent and volunteer their time		
Skills and Experience	Information Technology, Marketing, Legal, Finance, Asset Management, Business Administration, Local Government, Corporate Governance, Clinical Governance, Risk Management and Education	
Meetings held	2023	2022
Board	16	16
Finance, Risk & Compliance	12	10
Governance	6	4
Consumer Rights & Wellbeing	4	2
Corporate & Government Relations	4	3
Community Engagement	4	4
Our People		
Employees		
Head Count (Permanent & Casual Staff)	36	21
Effective full time equivalent	29.4	20.6
Nationalities and cultures represented across the organisation	80	4
Volunteers		
Head count	171	
Volunteer Hours (not including Directors)	26,375	
Operations		
External auditors have completed an independent audit of our financial statements		
WorkCover 2023/24 industry rate is 1.9169%	2.3697%	1.0656%

*18 months including 2021

A complete set of financials including notes, statement from the members and independent audit report is available from our website cultura.org.au. A hard copy is available on request. Please contact our office on 03 4210 0000 during business hours.



diversitat president

**DR LINDA
SYDOR
PETKOVIC**



Over the past year, we have continued to deliver quality services: social services for older members of the community, training programs and settlement services, as well as the radio station, The Pulse. These are now offered under the Cultura banner.

We are laying the foundations of Cultura by staying true to our values and paying respect to the pioneers who came before us, the members of the 50 communities that formed Diversitat all those years ago. It is important to continue to listen to the voices of the communities, and this will be evident in the Cultura Engagement Framework and strategy, which we have been developing over the past year.

The highlight of the past year has been the wholehearted return of Pako Festa. During the pandemic we offered whatever was possible under the circumstances. By February 2022, we were able to hold Pako Festa "lite" – a mini-festa at the Hub in Norlane, with food stalls, fashion parades and dancing, but we dearly missed our usual street environment. This year we were so thrilled to be back on Pakington Street, with the full parade and all the activities and celebrations we have come to expect from the singular community event of the year.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the past year has been funding, or reductions in funding, which is a perennial issue for community and not-for-profit organisations. The shutting of national borders during the pandemic reduced the number of people coming to our shores, and this influenced the services we could deliver through the settlement program. Interestingly, before the pandemic, we would often have more people needing services than we had funding for. Another challenge is to come up with an Engagement Framework that encompasses all of the different communities that make up Cultura, so that we can provide services, interact and connect with everyone who needs them.

Each group of new arrivals faces similar challenges: finding housing, learning English, finding work and becoming a part of the new community. As each group ages, its needs change too, for example, finding care and support for activities of daily living, and maintaining social connections throughout their life journey.



As new waves of migrants arrive in the Geelong region, new and emerging communities will join Cultura, and continue to grow the services and programs, with the support of the more established communities.

For the future, even though we are no longer MACS and Diversitat separately, the new organisation will need to remember why it was set up by those brave souls who pioneered this work, and to continue to value and respect community voices. We have a responsibility to listen to, and to give a voice to, those people who, for whatever reason, do not have a voice of their own.

GEELONG ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL INC.
ABN 29 252 806 279
FACTS ABOUT FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Our thanks

At Diversitat we appreciate the valuable contribution of our directors, staff and volunteers as we continue to merge with Multicultural Aged Care Services Geelong Inc. As a not for profit organisation, the 2023 Financial Year has been challenging. We value the continued support from our community.

Our Board

Composition

All directors are independent and volunteer their time

Skills and Experience

Meetings held	2023	2022	2021
Board	4	4	5
Community Engagement Forum (Geelong Ethnic Communities Council)	5	4	

Our People

Employees

Head count (Permanent & Casual staff)

120 137

Effective full time equivalent

79.9 95.58

Our financial position

Total Assets	8,957,641	11,248,107	14,184,483
Total Liabilities	4,805,065	6,450,487	6,943,614
Net Assets	4,152,576	4,797,620	7,240,869

Our financial performance

Income	8,173,045	12,419,074	15,483,750
Expenses	<u>8,818,089</u>	<u>14,862,323</u>	<u>15,325,221</u>
Net Result	(645,044)	(2,443,249)	158,529

Our key performance indicators

Operations

External auditors have completed an independent audit of our financial statements

WorkCover 2023/24 industry rate is 1.8334%

2.5860%

1.4632%

A complete set of financials including notes, statement from the members and independent audit report is available from our website cultura.org.au.
A hard copy is available on request. Please contact our office on 03 4210 0000 during business hours.



MACS chair SPIRO FATOUROS



The past year has provided the opportunity for Cultura to lay its foundations as a single entity. This has meant encouraging people – staff, volunteers, residents and service participants – to think about and talk about us as Cultura, rather than as MACS. This foundation is the key for us to look to the future and the organisation we wish to be.

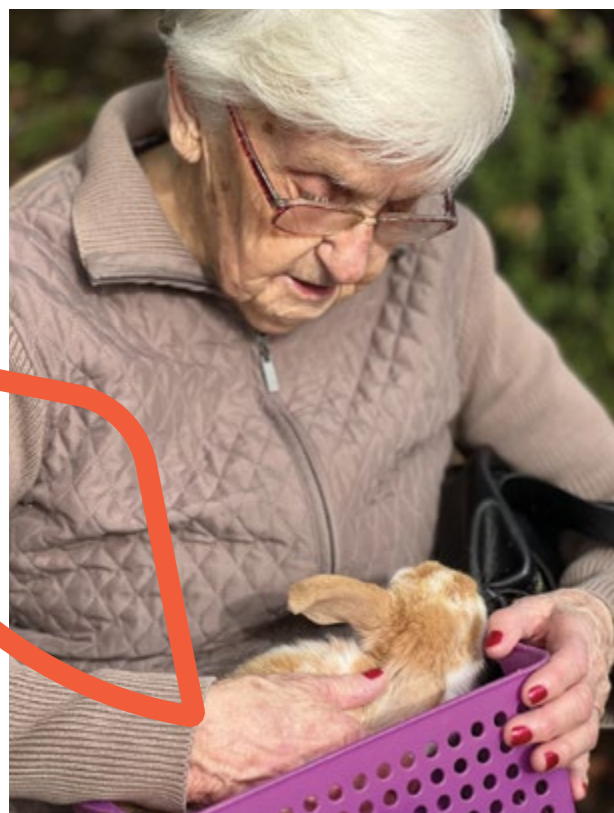
The COVID-19 pandemic presented the most significant challenges for our organisation over the past few years, and last year was no exception. For a significant period, just about every news report carried a horror story about deaths in aged care, and so for us the concern was elevated as we sought to ensure the safety of every resident and client, as well as staff and volunteers.

Another challenge was to successfully juggle these demands with meeting the legislative and regulatory requirements of the merger, as well as the financial challenges that come with such an endeavour. There has been extraordinary change in the aged-care sector over the past couple of years. Legislative reform following the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2021) has added further layers of complexity to our planning and service delivery. It is pleasing to consider how well we continue to function, despite all those challenges and barriers.

Due diligence and good governance provide the foundation for how we respond to such challenges. Having highly skilled directors on the Board, with broad-based experience and enquiring minds, who work well together and respect each other's views, enables the Board as an entity to question what is put before them and to think creatively with solutions in mind.

The 29 years of aged-care experience in MACS provides a bedrock for Cultura in the planning and delivery of services to meet the needs of our ageing community. We are building an organisation of strength and longevity, engaging the right people to ensure continuous improvement. Our message to the Geelong community is to connect and to be aware of Cultura's contribution to the broader community.

We are here to care and to help people who need our services, particularly those who cannot help themselves. At the end of the day, we get our reward from knowing that we have cared for and helped someone in need, and to make life better for individuals.



MULTICULTURAL AGED CARE SERVICES GEELONG INC.
ABN 81 567 107 023
FACTS ABOUT FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Our thanks

At Multicultural Aged Care Services Geelong Inc we appreciate the valuable contribution of our directors, staff and volunteers as we continue to merge with Diversitat. As a not for profit organisation, the 2023 Financial Year has been challenging. We value the continued support from our community.

Our Board

Composition

All directors are independent and volunteer their time

Skills and Experience

Information Technology, Marketing, Legal, Finance, Asset Management, Business Administration, Local Government, Corporate Governance and Risk Management

Meetings held	2023	2022	2021
Board	7	4	15
Finance & Audit	0	1	7
Governance	0	1	4
Quality, Risk and Compliance	0	1	4
Community Engagement Forum	0	6	4
Elder Rights	0	2	5

Our People

Employees

Head count (Permanent & Casual staff)	220	231	210
Effective full time equivalent	129	143.4	136

Volunteers

Head count		63	53
Volunteer Hours (not including directors)		4346.5	3315.5

Our financial position

Total Assets	38,514,008	40,794,275	45,221,424
Total Liabilities	24,906,459	27,477,926	31,084,617
Net Assets	13,607,549	13,316,349	14,136,807

Refundable Accommodation Deposits and
Accommodation bonds held (included in liabilities above)

17,686,207	19,297,614	22,319,226
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Our financial performance

Income	21,571,321	19,945,713	20,015,307
Expenses	21,280,121	20,766,171	19,723,764
Net Result	291,200	(820,458)	291,543

Our key performance indicators

Occupancy			
Residential Bed Days	35,465	35,768	37,127
Home Care Community Packages Care days	99,432	88,566	76,513
Supported Residential Bed Days (Bella Chara)	16,892	16,437	18,861

Operations

External auditors have completed an independent audit of our financial statements			
Our Prudential Compliance has been maintained			
Our Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd Certificate is valid till January 2025			
WorkCover 2023/24 industry rate is 4.1610%	4.6593%	4.0270%	3.58%

***All reported through MCSG

A complete set of financials including notes, statement from the members and independent audit report is available from our website macs.org.au.
A hard copy is available on request. Please contact our office on 03 5279 6800 during business hours.



