

Harmony Week, Harmony Day, Cultural Diversity week

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On March 15-21 2020 Australia marks Harmony Week - an expansion of Harmony Day, Australia's recognition of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21.

In Victoria we follow these dates with Cultural Diversity Week on March 21-29 which, according to the Victorian Multicultural Commission, brings people together "to not only celebrate Victoria's diversity, but to also spark their curiosity about culture and about each other."

Our community's diversity is increasing as more migrants and refugees settle here. Victorians now come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages and dialects and follow 135 religious faiths.

More than a quarter (26%) of Victorians were born overseas. Almost half of our population (46%) were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas.

The top 10 countries of birth for Victorians are England, India, China, New Zealand, Italy, Vietnam, Greece, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Philippines.

In addition to Aboriginal languages, more than 23% of Victorians speak a language other than English at home (compared to 18% Australia-wide). Around 1.23 million people speak another language, an increase of 23% from 2006 to 2011. The top ten languages, other than English, spoken at home are Italian, Greek, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Arabic, Turkish, Hindi, Punjabi and Macedonian.

Every year Victoria provides a safe home for around 32% of all refugees arriving in Australia. In 2016 Victoria's population was projected to nearly double from 5.7 million in 2013 to 10 million in 2051, with more than half of this growth expected to come from immigration.

This is why understanding and celebrating cultural diversity is important to all in Scouting.

Scouts Victoria values and supports this diversity and encourages our Groups to be reflective of their local communities.

Participating in events like Harmony Week at all levels of Scouting is a great way to celebrate diversity and encourage the inclusion of all in Scouting.

Harmony Week is about coming together to celebrate the cultural diversity in your area and spreading the message that 'everyone belongs.' This is a great time to celebrate and learn about the cultural diversity in your Group, and reinforce messages that everyone is welcome.

Between March 15-29 2020 your program could include an activity related to learning about or celebrating cultural diversity. To assist youth councils, here are some program ideas:

- Food night - cook a traditional food related to one of the cultures represented in your Group or area (or go out to a restaurant from that culture). While you are eating together learn about the meal's origins and when/how it is traditionally eaten.
- International night - for younger Sections, hop on board a (pretend) plane and visit three to four countries throughout the night, stopping to do an activity at each one. You could learn a dance, make a costume, eat some food or play a sport related to that culture. Make passports to be stamped at each country as you go.
- Family diversity museum - ask members to create a pop-up museum by bringing along objects that are important to their family's cultural background. Members can then run tours and share the stories behind the objects they have brought along.
- Learn a cultural dance or exercise - organise to have someone come along and teach a cultural dance or exercise (Irish dancing, the New Zealand Haka, Tai Chi etc)
- Welcome to country - Invite an Indigenous Elder from your local Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islands group to come and perform a 'welcome to country' ceremony



We identify with
around 300 ancestries

Over the past 70 years,
more than seven
and a half million
migrants
have made
Australia
home



- Guest speaker - invite an immigrant or refugee to share their story of their journey to Australia.
- Community Celebration - visit the Cultural Diversity Week website of the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Among other resources there is a calendar of community events. Your community may appreciate if local Scouting runs activities, but just participating is powerful. <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/cultural-diversity-week-victorian-multicultural-commission>

Harmony Week badges are available at the online Scout Shop. Scouts Victoria social media will share messages fitting with the 2020 Cultural Diversity Week theme 'Curiosity. Conversation. Community' and the "Everyone Belongs" theme of Harmony Week.

If your part of the Scouting world needs some assistance with planning and participating, contact Wombat Lyons, State Commissioner Diversity Inclusion on sc.diversity@scoutsvictoria.com.au.

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