

REGIONAL VICTORIANS OF COLOUR

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



REGIONAL
VICTORIANS
OF COLOUR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

REGIONAL VICTORIANS OF COLOUR ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE LIVE AND WORK ON THE STOLEN LANDS OF THE DJA DJA WURRUNG, TAUNGURUNG, DJAB WURRUNG AND JARDWADJALI PEOPLES. WE ACKNOWLEDGE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS ACROSS THE CONTINENT AND THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO THE LAND, SEA AND COMMUNITY. WE RECOGNISE THAT SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING.

THIS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND



REGIONAL
VICTORIANS
OF COLOUR



About Us

We are Regional Victorians of Colour (RVOC), a collective of people of colour living in regional Victoria. Our vision is that people of colour belong, are valued and can contribute to regional communities. Through our initiatives, we advocate for inclusion and social cohesion, centring the aspirations of newly arrived communities in regional and rural Victoria. At the core of our work is self-determination, advocacy and placemaking: the shaping of meaningful grassroots communities where newly arrived community members can gather, celebrate, and fully express their identities. In Bendigo, the Old Church on the Hill is home to Regional Victorians of Colour.

Our Values

RVOCs values are at the heart of everything we do. They guide our decisions and actions and highlight what we stand for:

Self-determination

Regional and rural people of colour are the narrators of our own stories, on our own terms. Our participation in decision making regarding our communities' happiness, health and wellbeing is essential. We advocate for greater inclusion of people of colour in leadership and decision-making positions across all sectors of society.

Inclusion

Inclusion is key to achieving our purpose. Everyone, regardless of their background, identity, or differences, should be respected, have their perspectives considered, and be able to contribute fully to society. Through our initiatives, we practice inclusion and support others to do the same.

Connection

Connection is key to building strong, inclusive, welcoming communities. We recognise connection to ourselves, each other, each other's cultures, histories, communities, land and environments as important to our wellbeing. We believe in the strength of cross-cultural connections and working together to make positive change.

Celebration

Multicultural communities are vibrant and strong. We recognise and celebrate what it means to be regional and rural people of colour, and the intergenerational strengths and capacities of newly arrived communities.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT

It is with great pride that we share with you RVOC's Annual Report for 2023. This report serves as a testament to what is now three years of unwavering dedication and commitment from an organisation that continues to go from strength to strength.

While I don't want to detract from RVOC's achievements, it is worth pausing to remember that this organisation was born from a need: that people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in regional areas can tell their own stories and in their own words.

We heard this need in the COVID-19 response as community members were left behind in being able to access appropriate and relevant information and supports. We heard this need in recent flood events which have quite literally left newly arrived community members to fend for themselves, with institutions having failed to implement learnings from the pandemic. And we hear this need weekly as we continue to work with people of colour who, in spite of their significant social, economic, and cultural contributions, continue to face discrimination and marginalisation in their workplaces, their schools, and their neighbourhoods. But despite these challenges, our organisation and the communities we work with have continued to move forward with purpose, passion, and most importantly, connection.

Throughout the year, we have celebrated several significant milestones, from the successful expansion of our programs to the nurturing of vital partnerships that amplify our organisation's reach. I will leave it to Linto, our Director of Community Engagement, to expand on these milestones, but I would like to express my gratitude for our Board, our team, and our partners in making these achievements possible.

To our team - Linto, Manorama, Akuek, Silvia, Ayuen, Anupama, and Eh Thout - thank you for your ongoing leadership, compassion, and care. I see these qualities reflected back in the communities with whom we work, which is the most important measure of the impact of our work.

From a Board perspective, one of our key achievements has been the development of a training initiative to support people of colour in strengthening their capacity in not-for-profit governance. Supported by the Victorian Government, this program has enabled our Board members – over half of whom are new to governance – to receive culturally appropriate training and mentoring around the expectations, roles, and responsibilities involved in non-executive leadership. My heartfelt thanks to the RVOC Board members whose commitment to learning and leadership has been instrumental in shaping both where our organisation has come from, and our direction moving forward.

Thank you as well to our core partners: Neighbourhood Collective Australia. Echoing Linto's sentiments, you have not only given RVOC a seat at the table, but helped us to build a table of our own, and we are ever grateful for your support.

Finally, thank you to every single one of you who has volunteered, shared a meal, sung a song, or listened to a story: with your support, we will continue to strive for a future in which all people of colour can openly and fully share, celebrate, and express their identities.

Thank you for supporting our vision and our organisation, and we look forward to walking with you on the journey ahead.

Andrea Wolf
Chair



**REGIONAL
VICTORIANS
OF COLOUR**

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

I am deeply honoured and proud to lead RVOC as we enter our third year. What was merely a dream and concept in April 2021 has now fully transformed into a grassroots organisation dedicated to amplifying the voices of newly arrived communities in regional Victoria.

Reflecting on the past year, we take immense pride in our achievements. From spearheading community-driven responses to the challenges posed by COVID-19 in 2021-22, we have taken a leading role in organising Women of Colour-led, post-pandemic wellbeing and recovery events in the region. Events such as the Women's Self-care Day and the 16 Days of Activism have truly exemplified our commitment to making a positive impact.

In our initial year, our efforts were primarily concentrated in Bendigo. However, our reach has significantly expanded this year as we actively engage with community members across various regions, including Macedon, Mount Alexander, Loddon, Swan Hill, Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, and Greater Bendigo LGAs.

The genesis of the Moving Feast Celebrations as a response to combat racism at the grassroots level has been nothing short of inspiring. This initiative, which began as a local effort, has transcended its origins and extended into primary schools. Notably, it has become an annual highlight on the Harmony Week calendar, celebrated enthusiastically in Long Gully. Our partnership with The Old Church Driving School has led to the Women of Color driving initiative. Through this project, we are proud to support 37 women in their journey toward attaining an Australian driver's license, aligning with their aspirations and dreams.

This year, we have also underscored the importance of partnerships in grassroots community development. Whether it's our strong community relationship with the Long Gully Neighbourhood House or the broader partnership with VicHealth, the power of collaboration is evident. Grassroots community work is no longer on the fringes; it's a model that service providers, local and state governments, and decision-makers are looking to and being led by.

While we position ourselves as a strong voice for newly arrived communities in the region, our unique approach of keeping the community at the heart and centre of what we do is getting noticed and making slow but steady progress. We are acutely aware of the hardships and challenges newly arrived community members face in regional areas. The social and economic complexities of the post-pandemic world have added additional layers of financial, physical, and mental well-being stress to the members of migrant and refugee communities in the region. The issues of explicit, subtle, and structural racism add further challenges. As government and non-profit-led support services fall short, community connection, engagement, and support are more critical than ever.

With the funding and grant opportunities in short supply, the coming year will undoubtedly present challenges. However, as we've believed from the outset, the community and our team are our strengths. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Andrea, Emma, Rose, and all the members of the RVOC Board throughout 2022-23. I am immensely proud of our team: Manorama, Akuek, Silvia, Ayuen, Anupama, and Eh Thout. Congratulations on an outstanding year that has truly made a tangible difference in our community. You are nothing short of amazing - thank you!

Lastly, at the core of our work lies self-determination, advocacy, and placemaking: the art of shaping meaningful grassroots communities where newly arrived community members can gather, celebrate, and fully express their identities. In Bendigo, The Old Church on the Hill is our home, and I am indebted to The Old Church community and all the members of the Neighbourhood Collective Australia team (NCA). Especially to Rose, Kate, Josh, Colleen, Wes, Jonas, Tan and Jess, thank you for RVOC to have a seat at the table.

As I conclude this report, I am filled with a profound sense of achievement and anticipation. RVOC has come a long way, and I am excited about the path that lies ahead. The dedication of our team, the unwavering support of our partners, and the courage, strength, and aspirations of the newly arrived regional communities will continue to be the driving forces behind everything we do. Here's to celebrating the journey thus far and embracing the promising future ahead

Linto Thomas
Director of Community Engagement



OUR PROGRAMS

Amidst the post-pandemic landscape, the initial focus of this year was on fostering connections and mental well-being. The year gained momentum with the launch of the Women of Colour Driving Project and the expansion of Moving Feasts to primary schools. We also provided support to newly arrived regional communities affected by the Victorian flood. Strengthening our governance capacities through an external consultant was pivotal. Our partnerships with local organisations grew, including a collaboration with Bendigo Food Share for their Vic Health – Food Hub project.

Key programs and initiatives in 2022-2023 have included:

- **Women of Colour Care and Connect Project:** A women of colour-led community project that provided social connection, mental well-being and leadership opportunities for newly arrived community members in Central Victoria. Supported by Priority Response to Multicultural Communities (PRMC 4) funding, Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Victorian State Government.
- **School Moving Feasts – Jump Start Project:** Building on the success of the Moving Feast community celebrations, the School Moving Feasts were organised in four primary schools and four community centres in regional Victoria. In partnership with primary schools, community centres and funding support from Vic Health Jump Start initiatives.
- **Women of Colour Driving Project:** In partnership with the Old Church Driving School, this unique community-centred driving project supports women from newly arrived communities to obtain their Australian driving licence. The City of Greater Bendigo supports the Women of Colour Driving Project through the Victorian State Government Flexible Funding Initiative.
- **Kura on the Hill Social Soccer Project:** The word 'Kura' in Dinka means ball. This weekend's social soccer program focuses on youth engagement and community connection at Quarry Hill Primary Oval. Delivered in partnership with Neighbourhood Collective Australia, The Old Church on the Hill, and Quarry Hill Primary School and with funding support from the Victorian Government's Building Safer Communities Program.

- **The Care and Connect Capacity Strengthening Project:** Aimed to enhance the organisational and leadership capabilities of RVOC, regional cultural associations, and regional multicultural community leaders to address post-pandemic community needs effectively. Supported by Priority Response to Multicultural Communities (PRMC 5) funding, Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Victorian State Government.
- **Multicultural Affairs Flood Relief project:** Aimed to capture the learning and experience of the recent floods and establish and strengthen connections between newly arrived communities and local community organisations in Central Victoria. Funding support from the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Victorian State Government.
- **Surge Climate Change and adaptation project:** Working with the Karen community gardeners to understand and adapt to climate change. In partnership with Adapt Loddon Mallee, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Long Gully Community Garden.
- **Harmony Week 2023 – Moving Feast Celebrations:** Another successful Moving Feast was celebrated at the Long Gully Splash Park with over 420 community members in attendance. In partnership with 7 community organisations and with funding support from DFFH Multicultural Festival and Events Grants.
- **The Old Church Grower’s Market:** Working closely with the Old Church and Bendigo Food Share to establish The Old Church Grower’s Market and supporting multicultural growers and customers to participate in selling and purchasing products. Funding support from Vic Health under Bendigo Food Share – Grow Cook Share Project.



Our Partners

Community Partners

Adapt Loddon Mallee
Bendigo Filipino Foundation
Bendigo Food Share
Bendigo Malayalee Association
Cornerstone Community
Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria
Ethnic Community Council Victoria
Hazara Community of Bendigo
Human Chapters
Indian Care
Karen Organisation of Bendigo
Lancefield Neighbourhood House
Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre
Lord Somers Camp – Powerhouse
Macedon Ranges Further Education Centre
Neighbourhood Collective Australia
Quarry Hill Primary School
Romsey Neighbourhood House
Sports Focus
St Matthews Church Long Gully
St Therese's Primary School Bendigo
Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
Swan Hill Harmony Day Committee
The Kindness Collective Kyneton
The Old Church on the Hill
Victorian Multicultural Commissioner
Violet Street Primary School
Welcoming Australia
Women's Health Loddon Mallee

Consultants and Community Facilitators

Annie Brigdale
A L Scarce – Road Class
Billie Button Illustration
Dixons Driving School
Fern De Mac
Hussnia Hussain Ali
Kaberi Jesmin
Karen Lady Catering
Laila Hashimi
Marks Driving School
Marisa Wanefalea
Po Tu Tu
Paw Mosha
Sakia Sultani
Shukria Kheradyar
Wes Fraklin Studio



Funding Partners

City of Greater Bendigo
Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Department of Family and Housing
Department of Justice and Community -
Safety Victoria
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate -
Action
Safe and Equal
Victorian Election Commission
Vic Health

Business Partners

Bendigo Cleaning Company
Champions IGA Long Gully

Financial Summary

In its second year of operation, Regional Victorians of Colour has successfully evolved into a grassroots organisation with a clear focus on amplifying the voices of newly arrived communities in regional Victoria. Our financial performance for the year ending on April 1, 2023, reflects a total income of \$361,053. Notably, the organisation achieved a surplus of \$15,768 during this second year. This positive financial outcome can be attributed, in part, to strategic adjustments made to designated funding, particularly in relation to grants that were prepaid in advance

Regional Victorians of Colour Income Statement for the 12 months ended 31 March 2023

Account	Apr 2022-Mar 2023
Trading Income	
Consultancy	3,431.36
Donations	1.00
Grants - Non-Capital	220,381.00
Interest Income	878.86
Other Income	909.09
Total Trading Income	225,601.31
Gross Income	225,601.31
Operating Expenses	
Accounting fees	287.09
Advertising	53.97
Bank Charges	143.97
Catering (20-400-350)	7,778.52
Consulting fees and professional services	51,777.21
Insurances	2,609.80
Membership fees (20-100-400)	111.20
Other	1,134.32
Police and WWC checks	123.20
Portable Long Service Leave	1,135.11
Postage & shipping	32.66
Printing and stationery	882.17
Project costs- other	6,566.32
Project resources	18.25
Salaries & Wages	114,723.50
Software	1,303.20
Superannuation Expense	11,993.30
Telephones and internet	29.77
Travel	1,104.62
Venue Hire (20-400-300)	6,518.18
Workcover	1,506.79
Total Operating Expenses	209,833.15
Surplus/Deficit	15,768.16



**REGIONAL
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CONTACT US

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