



# Handbook for staff + volunteers

A helpful guide for staff and volunteers when starting in their roles.



REGIONAL  
VICTORIANS  
OF COLOUR

## **Acknowledgment 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.

# Welcome to Regional Victorians of Colour!

## Welcome to the team

We're thrilled to have you join our community of big *thinkers*, *doers* and most importantly, *celebrators* of what it means to be a person of colour living in regional and rural Victoria. As a small grassroots organisation, we love what we do and we're excited to be growing everyday alongside our community, staff and volunteers (*that's you!*).

## Who we are

We are a collective of people of colour living in regional Victoria who are building stronger communities and having fun while doing it!

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 journey

Regional Victorians of Colour was founded by a small group of people of colour in Bendigo back in 2021. We started the organisation because of our own lived experiences of racism while working in the community sector and wanted to make a difference. We chose the name *Regional Victorians of Colour* on purpose to symbolise that we are part of the bigger, global movement: to challenge the individuals, institutions, and systems that uphold racial injustice.

In our initial year, our activities were primarily focussed in Bendigo. However since then, our reach has expanded to newly arrived communities across Macedon, Mount Alexander, Loddon, Swan Hill, Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, and Greater Bendigo LGAs.

RVOC has come a long way in just a few years. While we position ourselves as a strong voice for newly arrived communities in regional Victoria, our unique approach of keeping the community at the heart and centre of our work is getting noticed and making progress. With the aspirations of newly arrived community members as the driving force behind everything we do, RVOC celebrates the journey we've been on so far, and remains dedicated to a promising future that lies ahead.

## Our values

RVOC's values 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 learn, grow, and 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.

## Our approach

When working with newly arrived communities, it's important to remember that no community is a monolith. This means that there are a range of experiences, identities and values that exist within and across different communities. Each member of a community will have a unique context that has informed their needs, preferred language, and opinions on different topics. The information and language shared in this guide is based on our own lived experiences as people of colour working in the community sector. When working with individuals from newly arrived communities, it's important to specifically understand and address the needs and preferences of the person/people you are working with, and allow them to speak to their own identity first.

## What it means to be a person of colour

*People of colour* encompasses all non-Anglo ethnic groups and emphasises the common experiences of systemic racism<sup>1</sup>. The term isn't used to separate and segregate individuals, but rather to acknowledge the systemic barriers that people of colour face in society. Being a person of colour is not about the shade of someone's skin – it's about a person's lived experience of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism, including social exclusion and inequality. Whether someone identifies with this term or not, what matters most is that people of colour have the right to self-determination: this means, if you say you are, you are, and if we say we are, we are – it's not, and never has been, for anyone else to decide.

Since Australia was first colonised by the British, power was violently taken from First Nations people. From 1901 to 1973, Australia was governed by a legislation known as the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, also known as the White Australia Policy. This policy not only aimed to restrict the number of non-white migrants to this country, but to deport 'undesirable' migrants already living here. While this policy is now abolished, if you're Aboriginal or Torres Strait

Islander, or if your family migrated here from another country the legacy of this policy can make it hard to grow up here. You can feel like an outsider, even if this is where you were born. You may want to keep the language you speak at home secret or you may make sure you only bring ‘normal’ sandwiches to school, even though the Momos or the Banh Mi you eat at home tastes better. You might even wish you could just fit in and be like everyone else. It can sometimes take a while to find pride in your family, religion or the culture you’re a part of – but this is part of what makes you special.

Being a person of colour is a strength not a weakness, and at RVOC we’re proud to identify as people of colour. While our Board is composed entirely of individuals who self-identify as people of colour, you don’t have to identify as a person of colour to be a part of our community – our work has and always will be about centring the aspirations of newly arrived communities in regional Victoria.

<sup>1</sup>Askari, Javahir (October 10, 2019). ["The Political Correctness of 'People of Colour'"](#). *Political Animal Magazine*

## The language we choose to use

Words and labels are powerful – they have the capacity to uplift and empower us, or put-down and ‘other’ us. In our day-to-day work, we like to use person-first language that emphasises a person’s humanity and individuality over any characteristics they may have. In person-first language, you always mention the person before their traits or identity to emphasise their humanity – e.g. instead of saying “migrant” or “migrant person” you would say “person from a migrant background”. This approach recognises that being a migrant is just one aspect of a person’s identity, promoting respect and dignity.

There are many terms you will hear working in the community sector. Some of them we like to use, and others we make a conscious effort not to. Below you can find out more about the language we prefer not to use and why, and language we like to use instead:

Language we prefer not to use:	Reason why:	Language we like to use instead:
'CALD' or 'culturally and linguistically diverse'	<p>Here are some reasons why we don't use this term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It oversimplifies culture and identity: 'CALD' reinforces that it is okay to define people by our culture or the language we speak, ignoring all the other unique characteristics that make us who we are.</li> <li>• It lumps us all together: 'CALD' suggests we are all part of the same group, ignoring the fact that every cultural and language group is complex and unique (don't forget that within a single cultural or language group, there are still many sub-cultures and identities that are unique too!).</li> <li>• It 'others' us: 'CALD' suggest that the world is made up of 'us' and 'them', e.g. there are 'normal' (Caucasian) people in the mainstream, and then there is everybody else (CALD people).</li> <li>• Box-ticking and tokenising: Using 'CALD' in the community sector is an easy way of seeming inclusive without taking actual steps to fix deeper social problems like structural racism and social exclusion.</li> </ul>	<p>Depending on who you are talking about, you might use one of the following terms (<i>be considerate when deciding which term fits best</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People/person of colour</li> <li>• People from newly arrived communities</li> <li>• People from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds</li> <li>• Temporary visa holders</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of us want to be recognised for more than just our backgrounds. We want words that show we are in charge of our own identities, and for us at RVOC, 'CALD' just isn't it!</li> </ul>	
Refugees or asylum seekers	<p>These terms can make people feel less seen by focussing only on their circumstances and challenges, instead of their full humanity and all the other aspects that make them who they really are.</p> <p>Because of stigma, these terms can also be linked to negative stereotypes or prejudices that reinforce racial bias and discrimination.</p> <p>Labelling people as 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers' can also trigger traumatic and challenging events, and make them feel like they are just a label or visa status to society.</p>	
Migrants	<p>This is another word that when used to label people, focusses solely on their nationality and visa pathway, rather than their individual stories, identities and experiences.</p> <p>This word can oversimplify culture and identity by labelling everyone who immigrates under one label, despite having very different experiences - <i>for example</i>, think about someone who has immigrated from England to Australia, as opposed to Indonesia to Australia and how their experiences differ.</p>	
'Our multicultural community' or 'multicultural Australia'	<p>These terms are used by the mainstream to publicise and promote places as diverse and inclusive, often without asking people of colour whether they feel equal and included.</p> <p>It's important to challenge these terms (where appropriate) when we hear them in the community sector, as they can often ignore or 'gloss-over' complex underlying issues, such as racism and social exclusion.</p>	<p>A better way of saying this would be: <i>A country/ community that is culturally diverse.</i></p> <p>In this statement, cultural diversity is just one characteristic of many, rather than emphasising it as the main quality.</p>
Aborigine, Aboriginal, Indigenous Australian	<p>These terms, including the name Australia, are Colonial terms used by colonisers to categorise and gain control over First Nations people. It is language linked to a history of genocide, and highlights traumatic events without sensitivity or consent.</p> <p>These terms also oversimplify and ignore the many diverse cultures, Countries, languages and identities of First Nations people across the country.</p> <p>Many First Nations people do not identify with the term 'Australian' (and therefore do not like the term Indigenous Australian), instead they identify with the traditional names of their clans and Countries – e.g. Djaara peoples.</p>	<p><i>First Nations People</i> is the preferred language used by many First Nations communities and organisations. It recognises the long and rich history of First Nations people in Australia and their status as the original and rightful custodians of this land. It also highlights the multiple nations within the country, and emphasises unity among them.</p> <p>Other terms that are good to use are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional Custodians</li> <li>Rightful Custodians</li> </ul> <p>You can also do some research and find out the traditional name of the people and Country you</p>

		would like to refer to, e.g. <i>Dja Dja Wurrung.</i>
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# Get in touch

## Website

[www.regionalcolour.org.au](http://www.regionalcolour.org.au)

## Facebook

[www.facebook.com/regionalcolour](http://www.facebook.com/regionalcolour)

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