



National Centre for Australian Studies
Faculty of Arts

11 May 2017

Mr Gerry McNally
Committee Secretary
Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism

Dear Mr McNally,

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism to inquire into ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion

I wish to make two points illustrative of the depth and diversity of possibilities in the field of your inquiry: the first is in relation to terms of reference a. and b.; and the second in relation to terms of reference f. and g.

1. Allied veterans' benefits for South Vietnamese veterans in Australia

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to Chapter 7 of my book *South Vietnamese Soldiers: Memories of the Vietnam War and After* (Praeger, 2016) on "Recognition of Service" which highlights the important contribution in terms of social inclusion for a significant refugee community of the little-known allied veterans' provision in the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (which carried forward from 1979 amendments to the predecessor legislation) and the circumstances in which this contribution was almost thrown away in 1985.

This provision has been of great significance to the Vietnamese community in Australia. For Vietnamese veterans, it is not only a means of acknowledging their service as allied veterans but also of acknowledging their place in Australian war and immigration history, and of incorporating them into the Australian veteran community. It signifies acceptance by their new country.

As the Vietnamese experience reveals, the value of this allied veterans' provision should never be underestimated. It also shows how multicultural structural elements can be found in unexpected places in the Australian system and how deeply embedded these elements are.

For those allied veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who arrive in Australia, this acceptance will be valuable not only for the veterans themselves but also for their communities.

2. National Centre for Australian Studies (NCAS) at Monash University

My parents were political refugees from Vietnam after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, and I arrived in Australia as a child refugee. I am now Director of the National Centre for Australian Studies (NCAS) at Monash University. Multiculturalism is embedded in Australian society, and this can be illustrated by the extent to which under the rubric of Australian Studies, exciting and vital new work is being done in relation to multiculturalism at NCAS. NCAS has three major programs at the moment:

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MONASH University

- My work on Vietnamese integration and resettlement in Australia including those of two particular groups: women and veterans
- Dr Susan Carland's work on women and faith in the Muslim community in Australia as well as gender and terrorism
- Dr Agnieszka Sobocinska's work on Australians travelling to Asia, volunteering programs, and international development

NCAS not only embodies multiculturalism in terms of its staff and research but also in its teaching and engagement, in that it reaches out to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia, as well as internationally to Asia and the Pacific.

- I teach an intensive unit on "In the Footsteps of Refugees" which includes students' direct cultural engagement with the Vietnamese community in Australia, and an international field trip to Vietnam and Galang Refugee Camp in Indonesia
- Dr Sobocinska's unit on "Australia and Asia" includes an international field trip to Indonesia, and is currently taught by Dr Jemma Purdey, author of a notable book on the development of Indonesian Studies in Australia, and of people-to-people relationships between Australia and Indonesia
- In collaboration with the National Museum of Australia, NCAS' Professor Bruce Scates and Dr Susan Carland have worked on a major inter-cultural competency (ICC) project on "Australian Journey: Twelve Objects and their Provenance" which provides an engaging introduction to Australian history, politics and culture in the form of online presentations, and an interview with Justice Julian Burnside AO QC in an episode on "Multicultural Mosaic"

Many thanks for considering my submission.

Best regards,

Associate Professor Nathalie Nguyen
Director
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