Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia
Australian Multicultural Foundation

1. In your submission you state that 'the experience of the diaspora in Australia has been one of success and this success has been due largely to Australia's national policy on multiculturalism'. Do you believe there is scope to improve this policy?

Multiculturalism is neither a creed nor ideology. In Australia, as in many other countries, multiculturalism is a demographic reality; policies and strategies must, therefore, be in place to ensure we embrace our shared values and practice our cultural traditions and languages free from discrimination and within the bounds of the law. We must continue to ensure that Government programs and services are accessible to all, without discrimination or prejudice. Government policies must foster a greater acceptance of culturally diverse societies and counter stereotypes and marginalisation. Across workplaces, schools, communities, and cities we must develop capacity, an awareness of self and others and a respect of diversity. This requires leadership and a commitment to ensuring policies and practices are implemented consistently and effectively.
It is important that Government continues to promote the principle of mutual respect and denouncing racial hatred and discrimination as incompatible with Australian society.

In practical terms, multiculturalism summarises the way we address the challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity. It accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures and values of democracy. It also refers specifically to the strategies, policies and programs that are designed to:

> 1. make our administrative, social and economic infrastructure more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of our culturally diverse population;
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> 2. promote cultural identity, social harmony and social justice among the different cultural groups in our society; and
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> 3. optimise the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians.

The Australian Government's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy can be further strengthened by ensuring programs and services continue to meet the needs of all Australians, whatever their cultural and linguistic background.

It is important, however, that care be taken to avoid any suggestion that the goals and principles underpinning our multicultural policy stem exclusively from multiculturalism. In fact, these arise from **Australian democracy** which guarantees our civil freedoms and our fundamental right and equality. It is the **institution of Australian democracy** that enables diversity in our society to flourish. It is significant to remember that Australian multiculturalism had been built on the evolving values of Australian democracy and citizenship, all the while ensuring that it adequately reflects the balance of rights and **obligations** expected of all citizens.

2. In your submission you recommend the government 'strengthen policies that actively and genuinely promote the positive aspects of difference and encourage inclusion and participation at all levels of society to harness the social, economic and cultural capital of diaspora'. Can you please provide methods of how the government could implement this recommendation?

Policies that promote inclusion and engagement allow relationships to develop, fostering communication and awareness, greater acceptance and appreciation of diversity. Furthermore, the process promotes a sense of belonging where individuals and communities are actively investing in society. These are the necessary foundations for a cohesive and productive society.

In a recent report by Deloitte Access Economics 2019, commissioned by SBS, on the economic benefits of improving social cohesion pointed out that:

"Migrant communities are some of the most significant owners of small businesses in Australia. Almost one-third of small businesses, that is, almost 750,000 small businesses, employ 1.41 million people, and are run by individuals born overseas. This is despite 83% of those born overseas not owning a business before coming to Australia, with many more facing language barriers and having few social connections on arrival[1]".

"Social inclusion can also play an important role, particularly when it is supported by policy. Social inclusion programs, such as the Australian Cultural Orientation program and the Humanitarian Settlement Program, provide migrant communities with a basic civic and legal education, but also help in the first steps to starting a small business. Other initiatives like the Inspiring Rare Birds program provide business mentoring to migrants, giving them the knowledge, skills and confidence to build a small business".

"Social inclusion plays a role in helping people participate in the labour market. When people are socially included, they are less likely to face discrimination and/or perceive that they may be discriminated against in applying for jobs, increasing the capacity to seek employment. Socially included people are also more likely to have stronger and/or larger networks that can further assist in finding the right job opportunity".

With negative migration this year, the overall population impact will be the lowest in one hundred years. It becomes imperative to capitalise on the underutilised talent of temporary skilled migrants, business entrepreneurs, and other categories seeking permanent residency to ensure that they gain the required Australian work experience to enable them to actively participate and potentially open new markets and networks. It is also important to address those barriers facing skilled migrants in the recognition of their qualifications by professional bodies and associations in key

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[1] Hugo, G. 2011, *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants: Final Report to Department of Immigration and Citizenship.*

fields, such as, scientific and medical innovation, technology industries and engineering. Without compromising Australian standards, more efficient and quicker pathways to skills recognition needs to be developed and implemented.

3. Can you please expand on your recommendation to identify, engage with, give a 'voice' to young and second-generation diaspora to play active roles in changing and building 'social capital in both their host country and transnationally'?

Young and second-generation diaspora can play active roles as change agents and builders of social capital when given a voice, whether through activism online or in person. Second and third-generation diaspora are raised with loyalty to Australian culture while also having a deep respect and understanding for their mother tongue and/or cultural heritage. This can lead to important links between diaspora communities and contemporary hegemonic values.

Empowering young diaspora through advocacy and giving a voice enables them to become important links between diaspora communities and the wider public. These advocates can take the role of peacebuilders, linking communities through their understanding of the host country's language and culture, and that of their diaspora. Peacebuilding and cultural-sharing processes can be further facilitated through social media, especially within the second and third generations who have greater familiarity with emerging technologies.

Giving a voice to young and second-generation diaspora enables them to play active roles in their host country and transnationally, whether that be online or in person, building social capital and, as a result, increase trust and foster cross-cultural relationships. Giving a voice to these diaspora communities can create analytical and representative activist voices that promote counter-hegemony narratives[2].

Building social capital, which includes links, shared values and understandings in society (OECD) enables individuals and groups to build trust, work together, and, in the case of young members of the diaspora communities, influence change.

Second and third-generation Australians from a culturally diverse background have become successful entrepreneurs and business leaders in a new world of trade and technology. With these skills and understanding of the Australian work experience they are able to facilitate new businesses in new and emerging markets. To develop these new markets consideration may be given to provide grants that can assist the young entrepreneurs to develop business plans to investigate and identify new and emerging markets through their diaspora network.

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[2] Godin and Dona 2016, "Refugee Voices," New Social Media and Politics of Representation: Young Congolese in the Diaspora and Beyond"
https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/40384

4. Can you please expand on your suggestion for the government to facilitate and promote links to diaspora's country of origin, such as the 'ministries for diasporas' established in Italy, Greece and the Ukraine?

A growing number of countries have established institutions to facilitate ties with their diasporas more systematically. Some of these institutions are concerned with only their citizens abroad, others target permanent residents, natural citizens or second or later generations, with various structures such as ministries, committees, consular links, national/local level institutions or non-government organisations. These institutions provide an opportunity to develop more formal connections between governments but also utilise local diasporas to initiate formal and informal links.

In consultation with Mr Stefan Romaniw, First Vice-President of the Ukrainian World Congress, in using the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) as an example of an umbrella body for Ukrainians in the diaspora, this body represents 20,000,000 million Ukrainians outside of Ukraine.

The Ministry of Foreign Ukraine has a section that is responsible for the diaspora and a dedicated deputy Minister. The UWC works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Ukraine and has direct access to the Minister. The UWC has a signed MOU with the Ministry of Foreign Ukraine for areas of cooperation. The UWC also has a similar MOU with the Australian Government through Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The model allows for the diaspora to be heard. UWC prepares briefs and comments on draft legislation that relate to a) Ukraine diaspora, and b) Ukrainians national in the diaspora.

This model works for a number of reasons:
a) it gives government a hands on perspective of the diaspora from the diaspora
b) it gives the diaspora an opportunity to have input into legislation that relates to the diaspora and Ukrainian nationals in the diaspora
c) it assists in ensuring funding is spread across communities, in terms of priorities as the UWC can provide advice
d) the work of diaspora Peak organisations in 63 countries under the UWC such as the **Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations**, work closely with Embassies in promoting Ukrainian Government positions in Australia, and Australian Government positions in Ukraine, enhancing cultural diplomacy and economic opportunities supporting bilateral relations
e) work on common agreed projects

However, there are challenges and not all diasporas are as developed as the Ukrainian example. In many developing countries, creating effective and viable institutions that can address the needs of local and diaspora populations can be difficult due to lack of resources, financial, technical and political. The Ukrainian

model may serve as a model on how to overcome some of these barriers via capitalising on shared resources within diaspora communities.