



Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism May 2017

Submission summary

General comments

- Australia's success as a culturally diverse society is underpinned by government support for a multicultural society, good quality settlement programs and non-discriminatory access to services
- Research shows continuing majority support of Australians for immigration, and even stronger community support for multiculturalism
- Australia's current high level of migration is a major contributor to the country's record period of unbroken economic growth

Views of culturally diverse communities

- The Scanlon Foundation surveys indicate that recently arrived migrants have high levels of belonging to Australia, and high levels of trust in the institutions of Australian society

Settlement and social inclusion services

- Targeted settlement services encompass Australian government funded settlement programs and targeted state government initiatives, complemented by universal services
- *The National Settlement Framework*, released in November 2016 by the Commonwealth Government, is an important step to coordinate settlement and social inclusion services in Australia
- Under the international Migrant International Policy Index (MIPEX) on migrant settlement outcomes, Australia ranks well overall, at Number 8 out of 38 participating developed nations

Impact of discrimination and vilification

- Australia's multicultural statement *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* provides an important signal to all Australians, reaffirming the government's support for cultural diversity and opposition to discrimination
- Australia's multicultural 'brand' is an economic and social advantage over other countries, in attracting skilled migrants, international students and investment from overseas
- Acts of discrimination and vilification can damage Australia's multicultural 'brand', and cause significant economic and social damage within Australia
- The Australian government is to be commended for actively addressing overseas perceptions of safety in Australia, following reports of attacks on Indian and Chinese nationals in Australia
- The Racial Discrimination Act has helped to assuage concern over racial discrimination in Australia.

Impact of political leadership and media representation on vilification

- The Indian media's reporting on acts of violence against Indian nationals in Australia, and the government's positive response to address safety and overseas perceptions of in Australia, clearly demonstrate the importance of media representation and political leadership.

How to improve standards of public discourse on diversity

- If infrastructure investment does not keep pace with population growth, the outcome of more congested infrastructure can be blamed unfairly on recently arrived migrants
- The Racial Discrimination Act sets out statutory and community standards for public discourse on diversity.

How to recognise the contribution of diverse communities

- The policy model of "Productive Diversity" has been adopted by the Australian and NSW governments, to recognise how migrants benefit Australia economically as well as socially.

Legislated Principles of Multiculturalism

- The NSW Principles of Multiculturalism have provided a clear framework over two decades for the development of NSW government and government agencies' policy and programs.

Legislated Multicultural Commission

- Multicultural NSW, established as the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission in 1976, has for 40 years taken the lead in coordinating NSW agencies' successful multicultural policy and programs.

Recommendations

- Endorse The National Settlement Framework, released by the Commonwealth Government, November 2016.
- Maintain Australia's program of settlement services.
- Establish data collection on racially motivated crimes in Australia.
- Recognise the negative impact of discrimination on Australia's economy, society, and Australia's multicultural 'brand'.
- Recognise the value of Australia's multicultural statement, released March 2017, in committing the Australian Government to a multicultural Australia.
- Governments should make adequate investments in infrastructure to keep pace with population growth through levels of migration.
- Promote the model of "Productive diversity" to recognise the value of the economic as well as social contribution of diverse communities.
- Legislate Australian Principles of Multiculturalism, consistent with the successful NSW principles, and Australia's multicultural statement.
- Legislate an Australian Multicultural Commission, consistent with the successful Multicultural NSW.

Settlement Services International

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation committed to a vision of a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation. SSI provides a range of services in the areas of humanitarian and migrant settlement, housing services, asylum seeker assistance, disability support, foster care, and employment support services in NSW.

SSI is the largest provider in NSW of the Humanitarian Settlement Services program, funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS), to newly arrived refugees and other humanitarian entrants. SSI is also the lead organisation in a consortium, the NSW Settlement Partnership, of 23 partner agencies which deliver the Settlement Services Program, also funded by DSS, to refugees and family stream migrants in the first five years of settlement across NSW. In 2015 - 2016, SSI provided direct services to more than 16,000 individuals, mostly recently arrived migrants and refugees, and co-ordinated programs which reached an additional 11,000 individuals.

Formed in 2000, SSI is also an umbrella organisation for 11 Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and multicultural organisations across NSW. Collectively, our member MRCs provide services to between 30,000-40,000 individuals in any given year. Like SSI, MRCs mainly provide a range of services to refugees and migrants, particularly in the early stages of settlement.

SSI is well placed to contribute to this Inquiry, drawing on our extensive settlement service experience and significant engagement with recently arrived migrants and communities.

General comments

Australia is a country of immigrants and First Australians, with successive waves of migration contributing to the social and economic fabric of Australia. We are home to the oldest continuing cultures on the earth who have cared for this land for more than 50,000 years.

Australian society is both culturally diverse and, in the main, a harmonious society. This success has been underpinned by formal commitments by the national and state governments to a multicultural society, best practice settlement programs for recently arrived vulnerable refugees and migrants, work to promote equity in terms of access to universal services and legislated protections from discrimination.

Since 2007, the evidence base for community understanding of the immigration program and the principles of a multicultural society has been gauged each year by the Scanlon Foundation. Successive Mapping Social Cohesion Reports provide evidence of continuing majority support for immigration across a broad spectrum of Australians and even stronger community support for multiculturalism – an ambiguous term – and the benefits these bring to Australia’s economy and society. (Markus, 2013, 2016) These positive findings relate to majority opinion among Australians over time. Simply put immigration in all its forms and multiculturalism in all its meanings are part of who we are as a nation and Australia’s ‘brand’. (Markus, 2013)

Successful settlement and integration are key objectives of migration policy, with integration usually defined as the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and civic life (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013) and settlement outcomes are usually conceptualised across a number of domains including employment, housing, education and health.

Settlement outcomes are both economic and social, for migrants themselves and the broader Australian society. In economic terms alone, Australia's population is its most important and valuable asset, and migration provides a net benefit to Australia. The recent Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Migrant Intake in Australia found that:

“... with the current age profile of the migrant intake, gross domestic product is projected to increase by some 7 per cent relative to a zero net migration case by 2060.” (Productivity Commission, 2016)

The main elements of Australia's migration program are the skilled stream and the family stream. The humanitarian intake accounts for about 10 per cent of permanent visas issued each year. In recent decades the migration program has more or less doubled and the scale of temporary migration in Australia has grown substantially (Cully & Pejovski, 2012). The source countries of our migration program have also shifted towards non-English speaking countries, particularly countries in Asia and the Middle East. Twenty-eight per cent of Australia's population were born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), the third highest proportion in OECD countries, behind Luxembourg and Switzerland.

Australia's migrant intake is a major contributor to the country's record period of unbroken economic growth. Migrants, especially recent migrants, tend to be younger than the rest of the population, with about 50 per cent of those born overseas in the prime working years (25–54) compared with 39 per cent of the Australian-born (NATSEM, 2010).

Population growth through migration requires governments to plan for and invest in infrastructure, to meet the increase in demand for housing, schools, health services, public transport and roads. This issue was highlighted in the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report *Migrant Intake into Australia*, which recommended that:

“In determining the migrant intake, the Australian Government should give greater consideration to the implications for planning and investment in infrastructure and state, territory and local governments' ability to select, fund, finance and manage these investments.” (Productivity Commission, 2016, p.39)

a) Views and experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities

The Scanlon Foundation surveys (Markus, 2016) indicate that recently arrived migrants have high levels of belonging to Australia, optimism about their future, and a high level of trust in the institutions of Australian society such as the police, the health system, the courts and government departments. These findings indicate that on the whole Australia performs well in terms of generating opportunities and positive attitudes among culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities.

These positive sentiments and feelings of belonging and commitment to Australia, are also reflected in the views and experiences of newly arrived refugees and migrants, who have been supported through SSI's programs as documented in the *SSI Annual Report 2015 – 2016*:

"We feel human for the first time, and we feel welcomed. We are the lucky ones to live in Australia when other parts of the world are suffering"

– Recently arrived refugee

"Everything in the shop is handmade, and people come from all over Sydney to eat them. My dream is to expand into catering and then start exporting to the USA"

– Mohammed Reza, founder of Shiraz Ice Cream in Merrylands, Western Sydney, Iranian refugee supported by SSI's Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative.

"Our lives have changed for the better since we started being foster carers and we are blessed to have them in our lives"

– Refugee who has become a foster carer with SSI Multicultural Foster Care Service

"I couldn't speak English before, and now I use it every day. I feel very happy. I think about the future now, and I couldn't do that before."

– Afghan refugee

"It was great being in the water and feel that I could do the same as a person with sight. I didn't feel like I had a disability; it was like I could see again. It was one of the happiest days of my life."

– Vision impaired Syrian refugee, participating in the Surf Together program at Gerroa on the NSW South Coast, through SSI Ability Links.

"SSI helped me and my daughters go to doctors, get medicines, and even go along to community garden. But the Blue Mountains painting workshop has been a highlight. I am very happy."

– Refugee

"I have a Law Degree but my passion is film. I focus on producing documentaries about Syrian people."

– Maher Jamous, Syrian refugee assisted by Ignite Small Business Start-Ups

b) Adequacy and accessibility of settlement and social inclusion services

International best practice is for migrants and refugees to receive a range of targeted support services on arrival and during the first few years of settlement; alongside access to universal services and opportunities. In Australia, settlement services encompass programs funded by the Australian Government and targeted initiatives of State and Territory Governments. The rationale and Australia's experience is that new arrivals who have good opportunities and support will be best able to participate economically and socially, and feel welcome and socially included in their new country.

The National Settlement Framework, released in November 2016 by the Commonwealth Government, is an important step to coordinate settlement and social inclusion services in Australia. Under the lead

of the Department of Social Services (DSS), the framework will support governments to “make planning decisions on the provision of settlement and support services and to deliver coordinated client-centric services, informed by research and evaluation.” The framework states that:

*“Effective service delivery ensures that migrants and new arrivals are readily able to access the relevant services for their circumstances and needs from mainstream services and specialist settlement services, in order to fully participate in Australian society.”
(Department of Social Services, 2016)*

Oversight of the framework will rest with the intergovernmental Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG), with representation from relevant Commonwealth departments, State and Territory Governments and the Australian Local Government Association. This initiative is in line with international best practice to enhance settlement and social inclusion outcomes across Australia.

The most recognised international indicator of settlement and social inclusion outcomes across countries is the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). Thirty eight developed countries participate in MIPEX, collated by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs and the Migration Policy Group, with the Australian National University College of Law as the Australian partner (MIPEX, 2017).

Overall Australia performs well in international comparison, with scope for improvement in some areas. In 2014, in a collation of all MIPEX indicators, Australia was ranked 8 out of the 38 participating countries (MIPEX, 2017). The MIPEX Index is made up of several key indicators including recently arrived migrants’ access to employment, education, housing and health services, coordination of settlement strategies, pathways to citizenship and anti-discrimination laws.

The current mix of Australian Government settlement services is mainly provided to eligible humanitarian and family stream migrants. These programs include on-arrival services such as the Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) and Complex Case Support (CCS) program and the Settlement Services Program (SSP) which are delivered by non-government providers through the DSS. Other critical investments in settlement at a Commonwealth level include the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and targeted investments in health services such as the torture and trauma services in each jurisdiction.

Investments at a Commonwealth level are enhanced by targeted initiatives in many jurisdictions across a range of policy portfolio areas. For example, in NSW, 16 Intensive English Centres (IECs) provide English as a second language tuition to newly arrived high school-aged students with low English language proficiency. IECs also support orientation, settlement and welfare programs to prepare students for learning in a NSW government high school and to participate in Australian society. Similarly, the NSW Refugee Health Service provides a range of targeted initiatives to address the health and wellbeing of newly arrived refugees.

Providers of Commonwealth-funded settlement programs also generally deliver a range of complementary services that do not fall within the funding parameters of government-funded programs. At SSI, the range of services we provide to add value to on-arrival settlement services include the Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative to help refugees establish their own business, an

arts and culture program, a volunteer program and community engagement programs such as surfing, swimming and soccer.

SSI has also established innovation partnerships with the private sector to enhance settlement outcomes. As an example, under a partnership with Allianz, each year refugees are offered permanent work placements to fast-track their career pathway in Australia and annual scholarships are offered to assist refugees to access tertiary education and training pathways. Collectively these initiatives enhance and extend the outcomes that can be achieved by funded on-arrival settlement programs.

c) Adequacy of existing data collection and research on racially motivated crimes

Several academic papers have been written over the years on racially motivated crimes, including *Crimes against international students in Australia*, a special report by the Australian Institute of Criminology which stated that:

“Overall, the AIC determined that there was neither administrative nor victimisation data in existence that could provide adequate information about the extent of recorded crime against Indian and other international students studying in Australia.”

(Larsen, Payne, & Tomison, 2011)

SSI is not aware of consistent data collection on racially motivated crime at a national or state level. Data of this nature would be valuable to assist governments, law enforcement agencies and service providers to detect trends and direct resources in order to reduce the incidence of such crimes. The fall in numbers of Indian students studying in Australia, after reported race motivated attacks in 2009, provides a clear case for why such crimes should be monitored and action taken to protect community safety, before there is a significant impact on a migrant community, Australia’s economic interests and foreign relations.

d) Impact of discrimination, vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry

As a socially cohesive country made up largely of migrants, multicultural has become Australia’s internationally recognised ‘brand’. It is a key point of economic advantage and social point of difference, which along with other advantages helps to attract skilled people and investment to our country. The advantages of our multicultural society were recognised and marketed with great success at the Sydney Olympic Games, and were a significant feature of the successful bid for the Games.

The value of the Australian multicultural ‘brand’ can be damaged by discrimination, vilification and other forms of exclusion or bigotry (including racially motivated crimes), which can have a negative economic and social impact on Australia and its population.

The economic benefits to Australia of skilled and younger migrants has been documented by the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Migrant Intake into Australia April 2016. The report’s finding 10.1 stated that:

“... these benefits are highly dependent on having a system that attracts young and skilled immigrants . . .” (Productivity Commission, 2016)

Attacks on overseas students in the past and subsequent media exposure have damaged Australia's reputation as a destination for migration and study in countries such as India and China. After incidents in May 2009, a reported 4,000 Indian students staged a protest in Melbourne against what they felt were attacks on students motivated by racism. These and other events received wide-spread coverage in the media in India. For example, on 8 February 2010 the weekly Indian magazine Outlook published a 10-page cover story on the attacks under the heading "Why the Aussies Hate Us".

In another example, an attack on two Chinese students on a train in Sydney in 2012¹ which was posted on Weibo warranted a high-level Australian Foreign Affairs and NSW Government response to counter significant mainstream and social media interest in the story in China and across Asia².

These recent examples of violence towards Indian and Chinese nationals forcefully demonstrate how localised issues can have far-reaching international ramifications in a digitally connected world.

The perception of racial hatred in these crimes was critical. The current provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act helped to assuage concern over racial hatred in Australia and were cited by one Chinese blogger who wrote:

*"Despite the possibility of facing discrimination in Australia, there is still the infrastructure of justice and many layers of checks and balances in... [Australian] society. There are channels for the disadvantaged minorities to voice their concerns..."*²

After these incidents the Australian government acted to counter negative images of Australia, and is to be commended for actively addressing this issue, including through public statements and high level visits and dialogues, to reassure the Indian and Chinese governments and populations that their nationals living in Australia are protected from discrimination.

These representations have yielded results. Following the Prime Minister's recent visit to India in April 2017, the Indian government representative Mr Mazumdar made a statement regarding previous fears of Indian student safety in Australia:

*"The Australian Government has been extremely proactive with us when we have taken it up with them. So it is not an issue of concern for us at the moment . . . over the last few years, there have been no incidents really of Indian students being targeted in Australia."*³

For the people who are considering coming to Australia as workers, students or tourists, the perceptions of personal safety and tolerance are as important as the reality of safety, and influence their collective decisions, which impact on Australia's economy and society. And of course perceptions of safety and acceptance also directly impact on our culturally diverse population in Australia.

e) Impact of political leadership and media representation on vilification, exclusion and bigotry

Political leadership, and mainstream and social media representation of vilification, have a significant impact on community perceptions of migrants' safety and acceptance in Australia. This was

¹ 'This city is so dangerous': outrage in China over Sydney train assault', Sydney Morning Herald, 24th April 2012

² 'Rudd in damage control as media storm over Sydney bashing of Chinese students escalates', Sydney Morning Herald, 25th April 2012

³ 'India no longer fears racial attacks on its students in Australia' ABC News, Posted online 2nd April 2017

demonstrated clearly following incidents of violence against Indian people living in Australia, in the Indian and Australian media reporting of this violence and the response by Australia's political leadership.

The Indian media reporting had a major negative impact on the Indian community's perceptions of the safety of Australia, which led to an immediate and dramatic fall in the number of students from India studying in Australian universities.

Australia's governments have responded purposefully on this issue, engaging with the Indian Government and other stakeholders and the Indian community living in Australia, to reassure that Indians are safe and welcome to live, study and work in this country. At the same time there have been few if any recent reports of violence against Indians living here, and student numbers from the sub-continent had bounced back by 2016, when 60,000 Indian students enrolled in Australia.³

Shaun Star, and Australian lawyer teaching law at Jindal University outside Delhi, said that far fewer prospective students now asked about Australia's safety. "This is a question that's coming up far less frequently than in 2009", he said. Australia is in fact now ready to benefit from recent negative news coming out of the United States and Britain with regards to Indian migrants.³

As we can see from this example, political leadership can set positive standards on perceptions of exclusion and bigotry and provide strong messages that discrimination is not acceptable or tolerated by Australian governments and society.

In a similar way, the Australian Government provided a clear public signal in March 2017, when the Prime Minister released Australia's multicultural statement *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful*. The Statement represents clear and positive leadership by the Australian Government, to reaffirm support for cultural diversity and opposition to discrimination. The Prime Minister's foreword for that document stated that: "The glue that holds us together is mutual respect – a deep recognition that each of us is entitled to the same respect, the same dignity, the same opportunities" and reaffirmed:

"The government's commitment to a multicultural Australia, in which racism and discrimination have no place." (Department of Social Services, 2017)

f) How to improve standards of public discourse on race, ethnic and religious diversity

Australia's migration program contributes to economic growth through population growth and provision of skilled workers, and has a net economic benefit for the whole population. Increased economic and population growth through migration also requires governments to plan for increased infrastructure (including transport, housing, schools and medical services), inevitably required for the higher numbers of people and higher levels of economic activity.

If infrastructure investment fails to keep pace with population growth, this will impact on all Australian residents, migrant and established, especially in our cities. Such outcomes can be unfairly blamed on migration, rather than government planning, which can potentially feed into anti-migrant sentiment in some sections of the community.

This has lead Professor Andrew Markus, who leads the Mapping Social Cohesion research, to comment that:

“If there are problems that are of concern to people that flow from population growth, such as infrastructure or housing, then governments need to deal with that. It’s primarily a function of growth, not primarily immigration.”⁴

As stated in the previous section, political leadership and media reporting are important factors in public discourse which is respectful of peoples’ cultural differences, and does not vilify or unfairly characterise people on the base of race, religion, or cultural background. The Racial Discrimination Act is also part of a suite of responses that provides a set of statutory and community standards of public discourse and behaviour that is legally acceptable in Australian society, and provides all Australians with a path for redress where discrimination occurs.

g) How to better recognise and value the contribution of diverse communities

“Productive diversity” is an important theoretical framework and policy model, developed largely in Australia, which has been adopted by the Commonwealth and state governments, including the NSW Government. This framework has been used to develop government policy which recognises and values the economic as well as the social contribution of culturally diverse communities to Australian society as a whole, drawing on the productive advantages of a linguistically and culturally diverse society and workforce.

The concept of productive diversity is reflected in Australia’s recently released multicultural statement *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong. Successful*, which recognises migrants’ contribution:

“Australia is the most successful multicultural society in the world . . . We owe our accomplishments as a nation to the contributions of more than 300 different ancestries – from the First Australians to the newest arrivals.” (Department of Social Services, 2017)

The NSW Government has also adopted productive diversity to underpin its multicultural policy, and to recognise and support the contributions of culturally diverse communities. Multicultural NSW is the NSW Government agency which coordinates multicultural policy and programs in that state, and its work is underpinned by three principles, one of which is to:

“Enrich social and economic capacity through cultural diversity as an asset of our state.”
(Multicultural NSW, 2017)

h) Potential benefits of legislated Principles of Multiculturalism in legislation

Under the NSW Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000, six Principles of Multiculturalism have been established as the policies of the state, and importantly with cross party support. These principles include:

- The people of NSW . . . are free to profess, practice and maintain their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage.

⁴ ‘190,000: The most important number in Australian politics’, Sydney Morning Herald, 10th April 2017

- All individuals should demonstrate a unified commitment to Australia . . . the importance of shared values governed by the rule of law within a democratic framework.
- All individuals should have the greatest opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programmes provided or administered by the government
- All institutions should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of NSW as a valuable resource . . .
("Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 No 77,")

These NSW Principles of Multiculturalism have set a clear framework over two decades for development of consistent NSW government policy on cultural diversity and respect for cultural difference, and strategies to enable government administered programs to provide a good standard of services to our culturally diverse communities. The principles also provide a clear statement by Parliament on the value of cultural diversity as an asset. These Principles of Multiculturalism have served successive NSW governments and government agencies well over time, to the benefit of diverse communities and government agencies, and with no apparent difficulties for the smooth operation of government.

Equivalent Commonwealth legislation and Principles of Multiculturalism would also benefit Australian Government, and provide a clear long term framework for development of Australian multicultural policy and programs.

The NSW Principles are consistent with Australia's multicultural statement, recently released by the Australian Government, and Victoria and South Australia also have multicultural legislation in place.

i) Potential benefits of legislated Multicultural Advisory Council or Commission

NSW has had in place a multicultural commission since 1976, commencing as the Ethnic Affairs Commission, then Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW, and now Multicultural NSW. Since 2000 this government agency has taken the lead in the implementation of the NSW Principles of Multiculturalism across the NSW government. Its key roles are to:

- Engage with all sectors of society and break down barriers to participation
- Enable equitable access to services and programs
- Enrich social and economic capacity through cultural diversity as an asset of our state.
(Multicultural NSW, 2017)

Multicultural NSW as an agency has received cross party support over many years and played a major role in promoting the cultural diversity, community harmony, and the dynamism of the NSW economy and society.

The Australian Government and society would benefit significantly from an equivalent legislated national multicultural commission.

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