

Introduction

- 1.1 Since Federation, Australia has relied on migration to enhance its international trade and investment flows, diversify domestic industries, and contribute to the overall national productive capacity of the state. Australia's migration policy has been consistently designed to address both the long-term and short-term needs of the economy by attracting prospective migrants whom possess the skills relevant to Australia's economic demands. The current flexibility of Australian employers to sponsor overseas skilled workers on a temporary basis through the subclass 457 visa is a practical example of this.
- 1.2 Australia also has an extensive family reunion, humanitarian and refugee migration program. As a party to the United Nations Convention, and Protocol, Relating to the Status of Refugees, Australia recognises the importance of providing displaced people the opportunity to live a peaceful and fulfilling life free of persecution. For the past five years alone, Australia has received approximately 13 400 refugees annually.
- 1.3 Migration flows have contributed to the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity which defines the character of Australian society. Australia's settlement and support services have slowly adapted to the array of needs stemming from both established and emerging migrant communities. Private and public organisations have introduced initiatives designed to support the full participation and integration of migrants and refugees into broader Australian society.
- 1.4 In meeting the challenges associated with global integration, it is timely to discuss the economic, social and cultural impacts of migration in Australia, and consider what improvements need to be made to maximise the positive effects of migration to Australia.

Terms of reference

1.5 The terms of reference for the inquiry required the Committee to inquire into and report on:

- the role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda
- the contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, the Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region
- innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society
- incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve great social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole
- the role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity
- the profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants
- the potential of government initiatives to better assist migration communities establish business enterprises

1.6 On 17 February 2011 the Committee Chair, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, launched the inquiry stating:

Australia is a diverse society - it is part of who we are as Australians both in the city and the bush. Some European leaders have suggested that multiculturalism has failed in Europe. The lessons from Europe are important, but multiculturalism in Australia and Australian society is quite different.

Migration has brought enormous benefits to Australia, adding to the vibrancy of our society and increasing its productivity. We are a multicultural society but we need to stay in touch with the challenges that migrant communities face.

It is timely to consider whether a new policy on multiculturalism is needed, and how to ensure the Government's social inclusion agenda also meets the needs of migrant communities. Australia's settlement programs, which play an important role in assisting

new migrants integrate and participate fully in society, will also be scrutinised.

As a society, we will all benefit from harnessing the skills, initiative and optimism of new migrants to this country. The inquiry will also look into how best to utilise the skills of migrants, and incentives to encourage entrepreneurship¹

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.7 On 9 February 2011 the Joint Standing Committee on Migration accepted terms of reference from the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, to inquire into the economic, social and cultural impacts of migration and make recommendations to maximise the positive benefits of migration.
- 1.8 A media release announcing the inquiry was issued on 17 February 2011 and published on the Committee's website on the same day. The terms of reference were advertised in national press and submissions were invited from relevant individuals and organisations.
- 1.9 The Committee received 513 submissions, 22 supplementary submissions (listed at Appendix A) and 58 exhibits (listed at Appendix B).
- 1.10 The Committee received numerous submissions of a potentially controversial nature and decided to list all submissions from private individuals using initials only.
- 1.11 27 public hearings were held around Australia from 29 March 2011 to 8 June 2012. Details of the hearings and witnesses are listed at Appendix C.
- 1.12 Since the announcement of the inquiry, the Government, through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has introduced a number of policy reforms to address issues of settlement and participation, particularly for skilled migrants and humanitarian entrants.
- 1.13 There have also been reviews and inquiries into areas that fall within the Committee's terms of reference. These include the Access and Equity Panel's inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services

1 Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Migration, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP and Mrs Louise Markus MP, 'Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia', *Media Release*, 17 February 2011.

to Australia's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Population the report of which was released in June 2012, and the development and delivery of a National Anti-Racism Strategy by the Australian Human Rights Commission, launched 24 August 2012.

Structure of the report

- 1.14 Chapter 2 provides a brief history of Australia's multiculturalism and migration trends. This chapter also outlines the Government's new multicultural policy framework, announced in February 2011, as a preliminary to its detailed evaluation through evidence to the inquiry.
- 1.15 Chapter 3 explores multiculturalism in the context of the Government's new anti-racism policy framework. It examines public discourse about racism and diversity, including assertions that multiculturalism and the race discrimination framework inhibit free speech. The chapter considers proposals for amendment of race discrimination laws and mechanisms to address the impacts of racism in the community.
- 1.16 Chapter 4 evaluates allegations that the values and tenets of the Islamic faith are not compatible with Australian life, within the broader proposition that the policy of multiculturalism, in advocating respect for cultural and religious diversity, supports ethnic separatism. The chapter also explores evidence taken on Shari'ah Islamic law and reviews measures taken to address terrorism and promote social cohesion post - 9/11.
- 1.17 Chapter 5 examines the role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda and discusses how CALD factors can be considered indicators of social and economic disadvantage.
- 1.18 Chapter 6 comments on Australia's national approach to policy and planning by discussing Federal multicultural policy, outlining the different multicultural policies delivered under State and Territory governments and the role of local governments in supporting multicultural efforts. This chapter also discusses the recommendations for greater national planning and policy development across all tiers of government.
- 1.19 Chapter 7 explores the current research capabilities available to conduct quantitative and qualitative research, data collection and surveys in a range of areas including settlement and participation outcomes for CALD individuals.

- 1.20 Chapter 8 considers the contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's international relationships around the world. For the purpose of the inquiry, the term 'diaspora' denotes all identifiable migrant and refugee communities settled in a host country. This chapter comments on the views presented to the Committee regarding the underutilisation of diasporas by the Australian Government, and the absence of research, analysis and data collection on the Australian diaspora living abroad and diaspora communities settled in Australia.
- 1.21 Chapter 9 examines the main issues concerning the settlement and participation of migrants and refugees in Australia. These issues include current English language training services, cultural competency in the provision of services, housing, problems affecting CALD women such as domestic violence and translating services, and problems affecting CALD youth. The chapter also details the current Government services to address these issues.
- 1.22 Chapter 10 discusses the role of migration in building and sustaining Australia's long-term productive capacity by detailing the immediate and long-term benefits of skilled migrants, international students, refugees, and humanitarian entrants to the Australian economy. This chapter also considers the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of its migrants.
- 1.23 Chapter 11 identifies the primary employment barriers faced by first and second generation migrants and refugees living in Australia and considers the adequacy of Job Services Australia's provision of services to CALD job seekers. Throughout the inquiry, the Committee was also made aware of numerous Government, community and business programs and initiatives designed to help CALD job seekers gain greater access to employment. Chapter 11 outlines some of these initiatives.
- 1.24 Finally, Chapter 12 considers the importance of migrant business enterprises in Australia and examines what the Australian Government can do to help migrant entrepreneurs quickly understand the domestic regulatory environment in order to effectively start a business.

