

Inquiry into Multiculturalism – a school perspective

Our names are:

We are the Year 12 School Captains at Gladstone Park Secondary College, a large proudly multi-cultural school of over 1500 in the north western suburbs of Melbourne.

Around 90% of our parents were born overseas but most of the students here were born in Australia.

We are deeply proud to be Australian but we also want to retain pride in our cultural heritage and traditions.

Both sides of my family came to Australia looking for refuge and a chance at a better life. From my father's side, they came from Cyprus due to the invasion by Turkey. From my mother's side they came from Italy during World War II. Australia has proven to be everything they could have dreamt of, a place of refuge, hope and a chance for a brighter future.

My grandparents moved to Australia in 1951 from Lebanon in search of a better and safer life for their children, one of whom is my mother. They knew very little English, yet they lived the lifestyle and gradually learnt the language along the way. My mother grew up with more opportunities than my grandparents could have ever dreamed of, her education in Australia allowed her to aspire to become anyone she wanted to be.

My parents and great grandparents have lived in Australia for their whole life, and are very fortunate for that. However, my grandmother's grandparents came to Australia in 1856 from Ireland on the Southern Ocean ship. I am unsure why they chose this country, but am grateful for it. Australia has allowed my family to experience a safe and free livelihood.

Neither of my parents were born in this country, my father was born in Austria and moved to Serbia when he was four. Up until the age of 23 he resided there until he moved to Australia in 1991. He initially decided only to visit his sister for a little while, but then war broke out in Yugoslavia. His visa was extended several times until he eventually married my mother. My mother moved to Australia at the age of seven, my grandparents had made the decision to permanently move here because they knew of the endless opportunities Australia had to offer. I am extremely grateful that both my parents chose Australia as the country to move to, and am fortunate to possess so much, when they had so little.

We believe that a strong school like Gladstone Park offers us the opportunity to succeed academically but in a true multi-cultural fashion. There is an obvious respect for our own culture heritage. This, in turn enables us to mix with other students proud of their own religions and cultures. We are all enriched.