

**Personal submission for the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's "Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia"**

Personal submission by:

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**Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation**

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda; and
2. The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

I have no major comments regarding these two issues other than to say that multiculturalism should be an important part of the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda. People can't separate or disown their original cultures or their traditions from their identity, and nor should we. We should facilitate the unique mixing of cultures in communities and society with traditional Australian ethics and sensibilities so that Australia has a globally-minded culture with a unique commonality that is born of living in Australia.

Diaspora communities can provide unique links for Australians to overseas communities, businesses, and opportunities. Australia's reputation as a gateway between Asia and Europe/USA businesses may fade as other countries increase their capacity to embrace globalisation and reduce their barriers to doing business (e.g. China creating Special Administrative Regions that provide unique economic and political zones for international trade).

Australia's strength may be to utilise the unique cultural knowledge and international linkages that diaspora communities have to reinvent our role as an economic and cultural "gateway" between the East and West. I feel that due to Australia's geographical isolation, the organic development of economic and cultural linkages based on diaspora communities may be limited compared to other nations where there is multiculturalism, a higher flow of people, and where trade is easier and more common (e.g. Singapore, France, USA). Governments need to develop programmes and support the innovative development of economic and cultural linkages drawing upon the knowledge and experiences of these diaspora communities. This can only benefit Australian society.

**Settlement and participation**

3. Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society; and
4. Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

Comments for (3).

I think work skills development is the number one priority in helping new migrants participate and integrate into the broader Australian society. I believe work is one thing that maintains morale and gives people a sense of belonging and usefulness. It is important that migrants have a trusted mentor who can teach them new skills, whether they be established migrants or "locals". I'm not sure if this already occurs, but there should be programmes that are specifically aimed at migrants that have a cultural teaching component so that people

can integrate better/quicker into the Australian work environment (e.g. teaching OHS, Australian work laws, Australian tax laws).

This is closely followed in importance by having a national program to teach English language to those migrants whose first language is not English. It would be beneficial if the teacher was a former migrant so that rapport, trust and understanding between teacher and students might be built quicker.

Thirdly, teaching a basic course in Australian history and geography would be useful. I would like to think that all people who go somewhere new like to learn about the place they are in. I know I would. If we were able to create a national program, via formal classes or information packages in migrants' native languages, then I think this would be a valuable learning resource. May I be so simple as to suggest something like what they publish in the Lonely Planet guidebook on Australia, and the various regions in Australia, be useful if translated?

Finally, I believe sports and games transcends cultural and language barriers and can build a sense of community much faster and more effectively than many other things. Australians love sport, so I believe sports should form a strong component of any program aimed at enabling participation and integration into the broader Australian society. For those cultures that do not have a sporting culture, intellectual and cultural games like chess, backgammon, and other games, may help create cohesion and a sense of belonging, as well as enjoyment to both new and established Australians. I think Australian society underutilises the power sports and games have in creating a community. AFL's organised foray into China could be applied to migrant communities in Australia. Soccer, the world game, is easily one of the most powerful social lubricants transcending all languages. This could be one sports that could be organised in communities to bring people together, either playing it or watching it.

Comments for (4).

Access to good communication infrastructure is essential for encouraging people to settle wherever they are. It also puts people at ease to know that there is reliable and fast telecommunications infrastructure there so that they can contact family and friends overseas or in other towns and cities. The real issue is the high cost for using telecommunications services. I think Australian telecommunication costs are relatively high compared to other countries. More competition is needed to service rural areas. We already see competitive telecommunications services in the city that cater for multicultural communities, but this needs to be provided and promoted in the rural and regional areas as well. The National Broadband Network may be something that enables better access and quality of telecommunications everywhere. However, the cost to users must be affordable.

An accepting community is very important. If a community has a multicultural environment or at least migrants already integrated into it, it may be easier for new migrants to settle into that community. I strongly believe education of our children is a key part of creating a welcoming and knowledgeable community where multiculturalism can thrive. I believe primary and high schools are very important in providing education about other cultures and instilling understanding about other cultures. Ignorance helps breed the type of bad behaviour towards other cultures that we sometimes see in today's society. I think the continuation and expansion of the high school languages other than English (LOTE) curriculum has been good at opening up children to international experiences and perspectives. Maintaining and expanding the international sister town/city and sister school programs and providing funding for schools to undertake student exchanges to overseas communities is very important. To a somewhat lesser extent, I also think because subjects like geography and economics are becoming less popular in schools, children are missing out on an opportunity to understand the world beyond their backyard.

#### **National productive capacity**

5. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity;

6. The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants; and
7. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises.

#### Comments for (5)

My impression is that in the past, immigration has played an important role in building Australia's productive capacity and prosperity. We have been lucky to have hard-working people come here and contribute to our economy and society. However, the future needs to be planned carefully. We need to enable more efficient immigration of skilled people. We need more skilled mining industry workers, more scientists, more engineers, more healthcare workers, and more teachers. However, on the flip-side, we also need to have strong incentives to prevent talented people from emigrating away from Australia. We need to stop the "brain drain" on Australian talent. I believe the government is taking some steps to curb this, but more needs to be done. I think Singapore is a country that has a good model for valuing and attracting skilled human capital. Plus low income tax helps as well. If the birth rate is low in Australia, our immigration policy will be a key tool in ensuring Australia's productive capacity.

#### Comments for (6)

As someone who's been through the Australian education system, from kindergarten to post-graduate, we need more skilled mining industry workers, more scientists, more engineers, more healthcare workers, and more teachers. We need more entrepreneurs and innovators. With reference to the recent past immigration policy, we do not need more mediocre hairdressers-in-training. I feel Australia needs to rely more on innovation and new ideas now more than ever to remain globally competitive, we need to attract skilled and innovative people to create value to our economy and society, especially things that improve the quality of people's life medically, socially, or economically, or things that add value to our exports. In saying this, those immigrants who are here should be encouraged and supported more in undertaking training to develop the skills Australia needs. I do not see much in terms of academic, sporting, and trade apprenticeships and scholarships for a wide range of minorities, which are widely available in the USA. On the other end of the spectrum are trained professionals. It is a shame to see engineers and scientists from overseas driving taxis here as their skills could be used with better effectiveness and productivity. Maybe professional societies (e.g. Engineers Australia, Australian Academy of Science) should have special programmes that support migrant professionals to transition to the Australian professional setting. I may be wrong, but I'm guessing there aren't many or any such programmes maybe because professional societies are primarily membership-based organisations and migrants are likely not members so this group is not serviced by such societies. Maybe the government can partner with professional societies to develop and implement programmes to support migrant professionals transition to the Australian workplace?

#### Comments for (7)

There are many things that may be done to help migrant communities establish business enterprises. I'm not an expert in this area, but I think programmes that have been applied to other Australians can be applied to migrant communities. Maybe have more cross-cultural, English language, and Western business skills support and teaching programmes may be needed.

Signed:

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