

SUBMISSION NO. 287

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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
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AUSTRALIA

Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

Although born in rural Australia I, like most other Australians, have a multi-ethnic heritage. In addition, I share my house with an Australian who was born in a non-English speaking country. I see the intense problems of multiculturalism arising in many countries around the world and I am aware of the thoughts/discussions and growing discontent of many around me. For all of the above reasons I feel qualified to participate in the inquiry into multiculturalism.

I have recently returned from a trip to India and Nepal. At Pokara, Nepal, I was given a trekking profile which included a list detailing culturally acceptable behaviour such as 'do not touch or step over offerings (red powder, flowers/rice)'. The first sentence read, 'You are a guest in Nepal and it is appreciated if you behave like a Nepali'. I understood their request and accepted it as a very reasonable request. In the same way the majority of Australians make the same reasonable request, 'Do not touch or disrespect our Judeo/Christian heritage'.

It is my understanding that, generally speaking, Australians are happy to share this great land and the wealth and freedom it offers. Most Australians however, draw the line when it comes to destroying the existing values and principals upon which modern Australia was founded. The greatest majority of Australians are delighted to once again be able to celebrate their Judeo-Christian heritage during Christmas and Easter in our schools, kindergartens and childcare centers without fear of retribution for being politically incorrect or insensitive. So again, please do not touch or disrespect Australia's Judeo/Christian heritage in the pursuit of multiculturalism.

Submission No. 13 by the Islamic Council of Victoria call on ‘parliamentarians who feel ... that there are issues within the Muslim community not integrating ... to discuss their **perceived concerns** [with Muslim leaders]’. Janson¹ says the project ‘Learning From One Another; Bringing Muslim Perspectives into Australian Classrooms’ tells us why Muslims will not be integrating the way other peoples have. The booklet, she says, expects non-Muslim Australians to be socially inclusive learning about Islam although that courtesy is **not to be expected** in return. The reason given in the booklet is that Muslim Australians may be too offended to sit through either a Christian education or the parts of our secular education system that offend them. One of many possible offences listed was religious bias. Religious bias is a very broad term that could potentially encompass all of the history taught in Australian schools. This suggests that the parliamentarians concerns are not merely **perceived concerns**, or unsubstantiated concerns, they are in fact real concerns with the potential to develop into very real and substantial problems. I ask that you will seriously address these realistic concerns of these Parliamentarians.

As a teacher and member of the wider community I am concerned with the role schools increasingly play in promoting the moral and spiritual development of young Australians. Who’s morality and who’s spirituality? Vickie Janson, in a well-supported argument, suggests that the curriculum project ‘Learning From One Another: Bringing Muslim Perspectives Into Australian Schools’ is nothing short of Islamic Indoctrination. Janson asks, how will the multitudes of non-Muslim children who have no religious education be able to question any of the Islamic claims? She says Part A focuses on incorporating Islamic content and Muslim perspectives in all curriculum areas. She asks questions such as, ‘Will they [students] be exposed to the Judeo-Christian roots of modern Australia which developed the Rule of Law and the many institutions that have benefited Australia? Will they [students] be exposed to Christian theology and history and the achievements of great Christian men and women in the same way this booklet upholds Muslim achievement?’ Considering Australia’s history, it is only reasonable to expect they do and yet surprisingly in Australian schools they do not. Please address this current imbalance in our multicultural schools.

The Islamic Council of Victoria recommended in their submission that ‘The committee address religious intolerance in educating Australians that all religious practice are permissible in Australia as long as it’s not illegal or impacts on the rights of others’. I will now bring to your attention the five year long court case (2002-2007) instigated by the Islamic Council of Victoria against Ps. Scott and Ps. Nulliah and point out the hypocrisy of such a recommendation. I ask the committee to rely on the growing global reality of multiculturalism and the facts surrounding the issue rather than the rhetoric surrounding the issue.

I suggest Australians do not have a problem with multiculturalism per say, it is when our culture and our heritage is forced to bow in the name of political correctness or tolerance to another more aggressive minority. I propose that it is only when certain people groups gain exceptions to the law, accepted OH&S standards and cannot integrate with mainstream society, for reasons perceived or otherwise, that multiculturalism becomes an escalating and dangerous problem. Please address these inconsistencies in relation to our law, OH&S standards and social inclusiveness.

¹ Janson, Vickie, Let’s Get Real: A Response to Learning From One Another: Bringing Muslim Perspectives Into Australian Schools, 2010. P. 3

It appears obvious that certain cultures, like oil and water, do not mix without changing their very essence so I ask you, please do not contribute to the destruction of Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage in the pursuit of multiculturalism. Do not contribute to the destruction of my Judeo-Christian faith by expecting it to blend into all others, it cannot. Do not touch or disrespect the Australian Judeo-Christian heritage. I respectfully ask the committee to recommend whatever is required to ensure Australia's Christian heritage can continue to flourish and prosper.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the inquiry.

Yours faithfully