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Joint Select Committee on Migration

Enquiry into Multiculturalism

**Submission by
Church of Australia**

a Minister of the Presbyterian

It is not the intention of this submission to address every aspect of the Terms of Reference of the Joint Select Committee on Migration Enquiry into Multiculturalism.

One definition of culture is as follows:

culture

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>

-a particular form or stage of civilisation, as that of a certain nation or period: *Greek culture*.

-the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group: *the youth culture; the drug culture*.

-the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.

It is important to note that culture is an outworking of a belief system (either known consciously or embraced unknowingly). Religion is at the heart of culture – even the religion of Secular Humanism.

Multiculturalism is therefore the existence of more than one culture within a community, whether as separate ethnic cultures or as sub-cultures within a culture. Our interest is in the presence of multiple ethnic cultures within the Australian Community.

If there is a dominant culture which overshadows other cultures, and these cultures are prepared to accept their place in such a society, subject to the laws and restrictions of the dominant culture, then there can be a peaceful coexistence among the multicultural society.

When the Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901 there was a dominant culture originating from the United Kingdom and Ireland, and to a lesser extent Europe, (with identifiable sub cultures), and also Aboriginal and Torres Straight cultures. The preamble to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia opens with the following statement:

Whereas the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and under the Constitution hereby established:

The reference to Almighty God is to the God of the Bible. The basis of Law at that time was the moral Law of the Bible.

Since then much has changed. There have been waves of migration both pre and post World War II with the introduction of the cultures of Asia and the Middle East and Africa. The dominant religion has become Secular Humanism and the Christian Church has lost influence in Society. Up until recent times, these changes have been accommodated by the Australian Culture.

However there is now an 'elephant in the room'. In recent times a minority has been identified as not willing to accommodate main-stream Australian culture. Some within the Islamic culture are not willing to embrace main-stream Australian culture. If they could, they would impose Islamic culture on the rest of Australia. This has led to fear within the wider community and frustration and anger within the Islamic community.

This week the media have reported the following incidents:

- ❖ The Islamic Council of Victoria claims that Muslims are forced to live together in enclaves because of fear of racial persecution.
- ❖ United Nations workers have been murdered in Afghanistan because it was reported that a Christian pastor in the USA had burnt a copy of the Koran.

Because cultural hatred and divisions can tear a society apart it is in the interests of all Australians from all cultural backgrounds to live in peace and harmony. In recent times multiculturalism has failed, as demonstrated by the following examples:

- ❖ The ethnic cleansing of the Jews by Hitler during World War II
- ❖ The division of India into Pakistan and Bangladesh with thousands of Muslims and Hindus murdered
- ❖ The cleansing of Cambodia by Pol Pot

There is pressure to accommodate both Aboriginal Cultural Law and Islamic Sharia Law as parallel Law systems in Australia. These pressures should be resisted as there must be only one Law for all citizens; for the application of the Law validates the value of a culture.

The Christian Church is not afraid of being a cultural minority. The Old Testament Church was founded in Egypt from the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and expelled as a cultural minority under the leadership of Moses. The New Testament Church was initially identified as part of the Jewish cultural minority within the Roman Empire until it was recognized by Constantine in 313. In many areas of the world today the Christian Church is a cultural minority exercising a positive influence within the society.

So what is the answer?

Since Religion is the basis of culture it is important that the Christian Church continues to proclaim peace with God and peace with our fellows through the King of Peace, Jesus the Messiah. When he was asked by Pilate about his Kingdom, Jesus answered,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews;

but now My kingdom is not from here" (John Chapter 18 Verse 36, New King James Version).

It is also important that the Australian Government recognise that the religious beliefs of individuals within Australia and those coming to Australia determine their culture and affect the outworking of their behaviour. All migrants coming to Australia must be willing to swear an oath of allegiance to Australia and to accept the validity of the existing main-stream Australian culture, or be required to seek a place of settlement elsewhere.

It is possible to positively influence young people through the education system; but it is also necessary to give hope of employment and influence to those who are a cultural minority -- particularly young Muslim men.

There must be only one Law as the basis of Australian Society.

THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION - THE PREAMBLE AND ITS ORIGINS

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/UNSWLJ/2001/28.html>

[6] On 9 July 1900, the Act of British Parliament that brought the Australian Commonwealth into existence, the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* (Imp), received the Royal Assent. The Act came into force on 1 January 1901. The *Australian Constitution* is contained in cl 9, which begins: 'The Constitution of the Commonwealth shall be as follows:'. A Preamble precedes this and the other eight covering clauses, and thus forms part of the British Act rather than part of the Constitution itself.[5] The Preamble, and its placement in the United Kingdom ('UK') Act, is a reminder of Australia's colonial origins:

Whereas the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and under the Constitution hereby established:

And whereas it is expedient to provide for the admission into the Commonwealth of other Australian Colonies and possessions of the Queen: Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: –