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**AFRICAN THINK TANK
SUBMISSION TO
JOINT STANDING
COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION
2011-1 REVIEW.**

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AFRICAN THINK TANK

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

PART ONE: THE EXISTING SITUATION AND ITS HISTORY

1. OVERVIEW

1. The Policy of Multiculturalism has been of great benefit to Australia.
2. Australia has been a multicultural country from its beginnings.
3. The periods of greatest prosperity and growth have coincided with the periods of greatest migration.
4. Studies and statistics show that migration brings more employment and prosperity to all.
5. Studies and statistics show a lower rate of crime among migrants and their children.
6. Many migrants and children of migrant families are among Australia's leaders and outstanding achievers.
7. Monoculturalism as a national strategy has persistently failed throughout history (Japan may appear to be an exception to this, but this argument fails upon close examination).

2. THE CURRENT DEBATE

Conservative forces that are opposed to multiculturalism are using four basic arguments, all of which are intrinsically oversimplified, faulty or dishonest.

1. They repeat the charges of conservative commentators overseas that multiculturalism has failed in Europe and perhaps the United States. This is unproven and a matter of debate in those countries. They do this because it is difficult to find good examples from Australia.
2. They represent migrants as lazy, dangerous, or unprepared to integrate. Anyone who has experience of migrant communities knows this to be untrue. Migrants are extremely anxious to be accepted, to be thought of as Australian, and to play a full part in our national life. Identical arguments have been used against every successive wave of migrants from the 1850's onwards.
3. A debate does need to be held about how to support an increasing population. However, this increase is expected to halt by about 2050. The increase can be met easily by more efficient use of resources, a challenge that needs to be met to keep Australia viable as a nation.

The falling birthrate is slowing the rate of population increase. This results in an ageing population, something that migration helps to correct.

2.3.1 Can Australia support a larger population?

There are frequent claims that, since Australia is mostly desert, a larger population cannot be supported. Of Australia's approx 7,700,000 square km, 20% is forested and 6.1 is under cultivation (making us 141st out of 258 countries). The amount of arable land is about 10%, or 700,000 square km. Australia is a net food exporter. In comparison, Japan, has 11% arable land, supporting a population of 127,000,000 on about 40,000 square km. However, Japan imports a lot of rice. Britain, supporting a population of 65,000,000 on about 62,000 square km, (25%) is capable of supporting itself with food.

It is the same with water: most of the water that falls on Australia is wasted. The fact is that with efficient use of resources, Australia is very well able to support a much larger population. Abundant resources have encouraged poor resource use efficiency in Australia. Australia will need to make this economic adjustment in order to continue to be economically viable into the new century anyway.

4. The sources of population increase and the extent of refugee intake are grossly misrepresented. The greatest source of population increase comes from internal birthrate, though this is falling because Australia has one of the world's lowest birthrates. After that comes migration, basically skilled and family migration. Australia's refugee intake is 68th in the world as a percentage. Boat people are a only a small percentage even of that. There has been strong international criticism of Australia's small refugee intake and of the politicisation of refugees. This is affecting our trade adversely far beyond the limited funds used for refugees.

WATER FOR 4 MILLION

Let us say that there were an EXTRA four million people in Melbourne? What would we have to do to find water for all those people?

Average water use in Melbourne is 138 l per day (a quarter of the 1990s and a third of the 1940s).

- If 276,000 people in Melbourne went without beef for ONE DAY there would be enough extra water for all those people for a year. (beef: 20,000 l/kg)

- If we improved irrigation efficiency in Victoria by 0.0120174%, there would be enough extra water for all those people for a year.

- If everybody in Melbourne went without white sugar for ONE WAKING DAY, there would be enough extra water for all those 4 million people for a year (sugar production 1500 l/kg)

3. EUROPE, THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA, AND AUSTRALIA

3.1 EUROPE

The situation in Australia is not comparable with EUROPE because:

1. European cultures have very long histories as single peoples with long periods of development of their own strong cultures.
2. No European country is a monoculture owing to strong contacts with neighbours. Most Europeans can speak several languages. Even the United Kingdom incorporates English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh cultures.
3. The most developed European states have imperialist/colonialist histories and have administered territories where people have different languages and cultures.
4. The rate of migration, illegal migration, and refugee intake is far higher in Europe owing to the geographical proximity of undeveloped areas where there is conflict: the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa.

3.2 U.S.A. and CANADA

Australia is not comparable with the UNITED STATES and CANADA because

1. These countries had two hundred years of slow growth, expansion and development of their own cultures which had produced strong national identities before the modern period.
2. They were always multicultural because they are combinations of Anglo, French, and German cultures, numerically stronger indigenous cultures, and in the case of the USA, slave intake from its origins.
3. The rate of migration, illegal migration and refugee entry is far greater owing to the proximity of Central and South America (approximately a quarter of the United States is of African-American and a quarter of Hispanic origin).
4. The United States also had an imperialist/colonial period and continues to administer areas with non-Anglo cultures.

It may therefore be seen that comparison of multiculturalism in Australia with Europe and the USA is completely inapplicable. The motives of those who make such comparisons are suspect.

3.3 AUSTRALIA

1. Has been a migrant culture almost since its inception and a quarter of Australians were born outside Australia.
2. 80% of growth comes from birth rates. However, this is slowing and producing an ageing population. Migration helps to keep a young workforce which will be needed to support the ageing population.

3. Australia is one of the world's most multicultural countries as regards population origin and this has given us resilience in the face of international economic downturns. The international downturn that affected us most, the Great Depression, was during the White Australia period. International downturns since have been more severe, but they were met more effectively internationally and Australia was one of the most resilient economies.
4. Most migration is either skilled or family. Skilled migration cannot be cut back because we do not have the capacity to train our population in all areas. Family migration is a matter of the rights and human rights of Australian citizens who need to know that close relatives can live with them so that they can care for them and be cared for when they themselves age.
5. Multiculturalism is important in keeping a population that is flexible and can face up to other changes in culture due to new technology and international developments;
6. Migration allows replenishment of the base level of employment (see section 5);
7. During the coming years, climate change is expected to produce more radical weather events. A high population will assist us in responding to and recovering quickly from extreme events.
8. Refugee immigration is a very small part of intake and non-anticipated migration is only a small part of that. 'Boat people' are in turn a small part of that. Overstayers from Europe and Asia are much larger numbers. According to the Immigration department (fact sheet 86), the number of overstayers per year is about 15,000. There are an estimated 60,000 or so overstayers in Australia, as opposed for example to the approximately 2,000 boat people who enter each year.
9. The maintenance of Australia's international treaty obligations with regard to migration and refugee entry is an important part of how our nation is perceived, and has a strong effect on our ability to make contacts and trade worldwide.

EFFICIENT RESOURCE USE

Just up until 1995, 2.5 million hectares of land in Australia has become unusable since the introduction of European farming methods.

4. HISTORY OF MIGRATION

1788-1850: Slow expansion of growth, a high percentage of settlers were rejects or undesirables from Anglo nations

1851-1860: Great and sudden expansion owing to the Gold Rushes in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Population quadrupled with migrants from Anglo countries, Europe and China, and less from other parts of the world. Australia becomes one of the most prosperous nations in the world and Melbourne and Sydney become among the biggest and most prosperous cities in the world.

1860's: Gold rush immigrants settle down and bring families

1870's - 1880's: Chinese and Pacific Islander immigrants brought in to work agricultural businesses, mainly in Queensland. Also a proportion of Afghan and Iraqi migrants.

1890's: Increased Irish migration

1901: Federation brings White Australia policy. Immigration mainly ceases during WW2 and W.A.P. slows it down until about 1942.

1941-46: WW II and post brings refugees from Asia and Pacific

1948-1970's 'Populate or Perish' policy. Perceived weakness during WW II owing to failure of W.A.P. leads to large numbers of assisted migrants from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia then Lebanon.

Late 1970's-2000: Post Vietnam War, large number of migrants from Asia.

2000-current: Migration somewhat cut back, with the majority being Asian, and Africans an increasing minority.

9 MILLION PEOPLE

The population of the world is supposed to increase from its present 7.2 billion to 9 billion people by 2050, then start falling again. How much is nine billion people? The average weight of a human being is 68.5 kg, with a volume of .03 cubic m. So let's give them 1/4 msq to stand in (a tight crowd) and a large studio apartment, 40 m² to live in.

9 billion people would weigh 616 million tonnes. That is 100 great pyramids, or .00000000005 % the weight of Mt Everest (357 trillion tonnes).

They would occupy .27 cubic km, that is, about 1% of the volume of Port Phillip Bay (25 km³).

They would stand on 2.25 km sq, so they would fit pretty comfortably in the area of Melbourne CBD.

Their homes would occupy about the area of the Great Sandy Desert - or about 40% of the state of N.S.W. If we put them all in 12-story blocks, we could fit them in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

4.1 REPEATED CRITICISMS

It is important to remember that the same charges have been made against every migration wave in turn:

- They keep themselves to themselves and have no desire to integrate
- They do not understand our culture

- They either come from cultures that only understand war and aggression (said about eg Vietnamese) or a lot of them are organised criminals (claimed of Chinese, Russians) or they include a percentage of people who want to plant bombs (claimed of Irish, Croats, Africans and Middle Easterners). When we consider the current fear of Islamic terrorists, we should remember that terrorists of a variety of origin have been feared at other times. For example Croatian separatists and Armenians were actually more successful in direct attacks on Australian soil.
- They are lazy and want to support themselves off our social welfare systems.

Despite such charges, every culture in turn has settled in to become an important and welcomed part of Australia's rich social fabric.

5. CHANGES TO CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

- The first immigrants were mainly employed in small agriculture and as labourers. It should be noted that quite a lot of these were involuntary immigrants.
- The next wave were mainly employed in small mining and related industries (Gold Rush)
- After that, the emphasis changed to migrants who worked in large-scale agriculture, particularly sugar-cane
- The Industrial period lasted from about 1890-1980, and new unskilled immigrants were mainly initially employed as unskilled factory workers
- Since 1980, Australia gradually changed from an Industrial society to an Information society. The lowest tier of industrial jobs has been largely lost, and so has the next tier up, basic administrative jobs. Immigrants now increasingly move into the lowest tier of service and retail work.

This means that the level of education needed to participate in society has gradually increased from 1850 onwards.

Another important point, in fact a vital point, is that the level of population needed to move into each new level of technology increases. Let us take for example

farming implements. A base level of farming is a man with a pointed stick. The next level is a man with a hoe, which requires a miner, a refiner, a metalworker, a woodworker-let's say a minimum of ten or so people to produce. The next level, simple machines, requires a factory. The next level, combine harvesters, requires several powered factories and an assembly plant. Agricultural challenges in this century are things like Carbon Sequestration, which will probably be a necessity as it will take us a while to implement renewable energy. But the development of effective Carbon Sequestration will involve research and manufacturing by millions of people internationally. In other words, the uptake of new technology requires, for the next fifty years or so, an increasing population base. This is needed to

generate the income and knowledge needed to acquire increasingly complex technology. Basically, if we want fast broadband, more universities, and MRI scanners in every hospital, we are going to have to have the people to pay for them.

6. THE THREE PHASES OF MIGRATION

6.1 DEVELOPING - People come with little background and gradually manage to find stable, unskilled work.

6.2 INCREASING INTEGRATION - They are in settled employment and try to increase employment and educational opportunities for their children. Increasingly they also start businesses and generate employment for themselves.

6.3 FULL INTEGRATION - their children's children are generally indistinguishable from Australians of other background.

7. DEFICIENCIES IN POLICY AND THE TYPES OF SERVICES NEEDED BY MIGRANTS

As society changes, the strategies that are needed to assist migrants to integrate and contribute fully to the Australian economy also change. *The provision of services tends to lag behind societal change.* As the pace of change of society becomes faster, this lag in understanding the most efficient services to provide becomes more pronounced.

With assistance, migrants and their children have a very high rate of successful integration. Investment in services that assist integration is small compared to the financial benefits that Australia gains. However, it needs to be understood that because the gap between the knowledge and background of migrants and the technological level of the society that they are entering is much wider than at any other time in history, the integrative services have to provide more. Services are failing because assistance is continued for periods that were sufficient historically but are manifestly inadequate now. Also, the nature of services has to change.

Three main strategies are of greatest importance in assisting integration by migrants.

7.1 ENABLING MIGRANTS TO GAIN EMPLOYMENT, any employment, even one day a week, is the single greatest factor in encouraging integration. In employment, there is necessity and incentive to develop skills and integration. Without employment, there is the risk of developing permanently alienated subcultures. It may be necessary to give tax breaks or incentives to industries in order to stop them moving offshore. During the 1970's, the hostel system for immigrants was of great benefit in helping new arrivals gain employment, support each other and integrate.

7.2 INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES are being developed rather patchily and in some cases, infrastructure is falling further behind. The most important infrastructure with respect to employment is transport. Transport in population centres tends to be radial and in most cities it can be difficult to move from suburbs to industrial areas and centres of employment that are immediately adjacent without having to detour via a transport hub. In addition, services do not operate during the extended hours that

employers operate. Transport strategy needs to be co-ordinated nationally and the federal government needs to ensure that transport infrastructure is continually updated. In Victoria, for example, the rail infrastructure is technologically very outdated compared to most developed countries. In addition, newly developed areas on the outskirts are woefully separated from employment areas and are deficient in services.

The second deficiency in infrastructure services is the crisis in housing and the extreme waiting periods for state housing. Once again, federal government needs to work with state governments to ensure that policy ensures a good supply of rental housing and that there is sufficient construction of state housing. When population growth tapers off in about forty years time, these areas can be sold or converted to other uses.

7.3 THE MOST IMPORTANT NEED IS TO EMPOWER THE COMMUNITIES themselves. It needs to be recognised that community/cultural organisations in fact function as the most efficient service organisations, delivering a very wide range of services to members.

7.3.1 Funding Only One Side

At present, most funding goes to local government bodies and NGOs, because these have much more efficient processes for seeking funding and also have the best-developed administrative systems for apparent accountability. However, much of that accountability is in fact on paper and does not deliver a good range of services where they are needed. Organisations of this type do not have the grassroots outreach that alone can really understand and meet community needs.

7.3.2 Mutual Parasitism

Funding is provided for programs that are intended to be consumed by communities. At best, most of these programs do not reach the most needy. At worst, they are entirely unsuccessful or develop a culture of dependency – that is a client base that is unrepresentative and depends on them. Thus there is a symbiotic parasitism – some people from the challenged communities become dependent on the organisation for funds, then the organisation in turn relies on its list of clients to obtain the funding to maintain itself. Workers may be employed that *in theory* are from the developing communities, but in fact are not. So an ‘African’ worker may be employed, and indeed that person might be satisfyingly black – but very often they have no background whatsoever in the developing communities, and are not drawn from the developing communities. Why? Because employment requires submission of a Statement Addressing Selection Criteria, including university qualifications - which are actually pretty irrelevant in practice, except of course for generating written documentation. Leaders of developing communities seldom have the background and qualifications to apply.

As a consequence the workers are marginalised in both environments. At their place of employment, they are not really networked or integrated, and when they visit the communities, they sit in a shared office for two hours and nobody visits. Basically, all many do is generate letters and other evidence to justify their own employment.

7.3.3 Paper Aquittals

There are a great many underperforming programs. For example, a program may gain funding on the basis that it distributed 30,000 leaflets on three separate issues to developing communities. In fact what has happened is that they have designed, printed, and sent out bundles of pamphlets to communities, who then either dump them or put them on the communal tables – but nobody ever reads them. Just as one example, a study by the African Think Tank of problems faced by Horn of Africa women in passing driver tests, showed that the test translation into Somali was either incompetent or used a dialect that the women did not understand. It took some years to get this problem remedied – in fact, it is still being worked on.

A training course might train two hundred people. Not one of those people might succeed in gaining employment. The provider still gets paid for providing the course. Employment Service Providers used to put heavy pressure on clients to attend courses. So unemployed people with doctorates and industry experience were being forced into courses designed for semi-literate labourers. This has improved a good deal.

This happens within the communities too. For example, a small group within one community, who present themselves as being representative, are not. They have received substantial funding to deliver services which nobody uses. Why? Because they are the very small minority who support the government that the great majority of the community have been tortured and abused by and are refugees from.

So although many bodies are funded to reach out to developing communities, they have neither the knowledge nor the contacts. They have few members of the communities they seek to serve within their ranks. . The other example of misfunding is to fund community groups that are not truly representative or active.

Unless the developing communities also have funded workers, they have no capacity to reach back.

7.3.4 Ineffective Outreach

Again, there are many organisations that would like to develop a program for developing communities. For example, there are employment agencies in Footscray that would very much like to be able to work with the African communities. But they cannot get the African communities to engage with them. Why? Because they have nothing to offer. They are not engaged with the leaders of those communities, because the leaders can see no benefit. The communities are being offered courses and programs that they did not design and which they are expected to passively consume. Meanwhile, their own very effective employment programs cannot fund workers – in fact, they are scraping for money for photocopy paper. The providers might well want them to help design more effective courses – but the community leaders have to triage their time.

This is not a uniquely African issue. The best advertising is Word of Mouth: the best links are personal links. Any developing community has leaders that are very time-challenged, and the community itself is

very resources-challenged. They are being approached regularly by people that will make money from working with them. It is hardly surprising if they support and work with only those people who also support their programs.

The way forward is to fund workers and volunteers ***within the developing communities*** and to encourage them to develop the systems and partnerships that will enable them to deliver accountability. In the first instance, however, ***accountability must be a matter of grant administrators outreaching into and observing the work in these communities*** so they can identify which funding is used effectively and which not.

Whether we are talking about NGOs and Councils, or whether we are talking about community organisations, accountability should move away from a paper model. Words are just words: they are NOT proof. ***Paper accountability is a failure.*** The only way to provide true accountability, and to separate underperforming from underfunded programs, is for the administrators to be on the ground themselves – doing spot checks on the courses and activities, visiting the offices, and themselves providing the reports and details.

7.3.5 Community organisations are service organisations

One reason for this misdirection of funding is that community organisations are perceived as essentially social or cultural – they organise get-togethers, dinners, festivals etc. But it needs to be understood that many community organisations (and these need to be identified) are better understood as service organisations, helping their communities with a very wide range of employment, integration, welfare, migration, and other service issues. There are also other community organisations that could move into this function, but at present lack the training and resources. To some extent, they can be trained by outside organisations – for example in basic administrative procedures – but most of the training and expertise must come from hands-on involvement with others of their background who have gone the same route.

7.3.6 Put the administrators in the communities

There is another approach which can be developed. That is to actually put the administrators (we will say the white administrators, understanding that what we mean here is a background and mind-set), into the communities. This is not easy to accomplish – it isn't easy to find the administrators that are prepared to work as part of the communities. The communities themselves are sometimes slow to accept that it may be more useful to fund an outsider in their midst than to fund a third or fourth worker within their community. Nevertheless, this approach does work. It has been extremely effective in the case of, for example, the Eritrean Community in Australia.

The skills that are needed to negotiate the structures of the wider community are very rare in the developing communities. For a developing community to move forward always requires that on-the-ground partnerships be formed with people from the wider community.

7.3.7 Partial Summary

Partially summarising item 7, what we need is:

i) People from within the developing communities who have an understanding of the wider community and can pass the necessary skills on to those who do not;

ii) People from the wider community who are prepared to work closely with, at the grassroots level, and within, developing communities.

Though such people are not common, they do exist. And most of them are working as taxi-drivers or call centre operators, because there is no funding to employ them. The effective utilisation of such people can accelerate integration a great deal and result in significant long-term improvements and savings.

The increasing tendency to demand academic qualifications is excluding many of the most valuable and experienced people, both from the developing and the wider communities.

8. OTHER NEEDS

Subject to the primary needs above, there are other needs that programs must also address.

8.1 ACTIVITIES FOR THE FIRST-GENERATION CHILDREN. A very great concern for migrants is family breakdown and the vulnerability of their children to criminals and drug dealers. This is being efficiently addressed by them in the same way that it has always been addressed historically, by the development of sporting, social, and artistic programs for the young people. There are many programs that are very effective but are struggling and are in urgent need of more funding. The most successful are in a position to expand and are in great demand: funding is the limiting factor.

One recent development in Victoria is discretionary funding within police local area commands that can be disbursed on application to area commanders or inspectors via multicultural officers. This means that programs that are seen to be of benefit can receive immediate assistance.

“The minister he came, the mayor he came, the inspector he came. All of them say what we are doing is fantastic. How come none of them can give us any money?” (African Community Volunteer). The type of programs above, discretionary money that is easier to access, are a very useful step.

8.2 DRIVING PROGRAMS are essential to help develop employment and to help empower the women in the community. At present, driving programs do not provide for long enough periods and tests are unsuitable in many cases.

The industrial zones that will employ workers from the large housing complexes are often difficult to get to. One reason for this is that the apartment complexes are older, and the industries that may have been nearby have moved further away: also housing is built where the government has land, not necessarily where there is employment. In addition, they are ill-served by transport during the night shift hours. Women also need to be able to deliver children to neighbours, relatives, or a crèche. So employment, especially for women, is often linked to driving skills.

8.3 LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS are another essential that are provided in a rather restrictive format, offsite, for periods that are too short, and in other ways do not meet the needs of the community. Homework clubs and computer cafes are one way in which communities are seeking to meet these needs. At present these are usually provided offsite and at inconvenient times, which means that uptake is poor. They are some well-provided NGO services that are hardly used.

8.4 AGED AND MEDICAL: As the first generation of developing migrants ages, the provision of culturally appropriate medical and aged care is also emerging as an issue.

8.5 I.T. ACCESS: is also vital in today's society. Although a lot of money is going into providing facilities and training, little of that is in the places, at the times, and by the people, that can make a difference.

9. CONCLUSION

The main points that have been covered here are:

- Australia is a migrant country and comparison with other countries is seldom appropriate;
- Migration and multiculturalism is and always has been an essential part of the Australian identity and a source of strength and prosperity;
- The criticisms laid at migration and multiculturalism now are similar to such dialogues at other periods of cultural change;
- Migration and multiculturalism will continue to be an important and necessary part of the Australian identity;
- The barriers faced by migrants now are much higher owing to technological change;
- Employment is the principal means of integrating migrants and their main concern;
- **The lack of empowerment of multicultural communities and funding of workers and volunteers at the grassroots level is the main deficiency in existing service provision.**

10. PART TWO: IMPENDING SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE NEED TO PLAN

So far, we have considered mainly the existing situation, and we have tried to suggest smaller changes or additions within the structure that will produce better and more efficient outcomes.

However, these are really just stop-gap solutions. The fact is that worldwide, the change in culture is actually so great that we need to start planning how to introduce larger changes to our culture and institutions. New times require new methods. **One problem that we are having at the moment is that to quite a large extent, we are using industrial-era structures and methods in the information age.**

If we go back to section 1.5, we will see that the economic base of Australia has changed five times. Initial settlement was based around small-scale agriculture. This was followed in turn by a small-scale mining boom, large-scale agriculture, the industrial period, and now the information society. Each of these were accompanied by structural changes. For example, governmentally, the system of rule by Britain gave way to limited autonomy under governors, to State governments, to Federation. In other countries there were similar changes. The robustness of the democratic model as practised under the Westminster System and the 'republican' United States system meant that these could adapt rather than completely change form, but nevertheless, there were very significant changes to the model - the widening of the voter base, the dismantling of the House of Lords and so on.

A second change was in what we regard as '-country'. During this period, smaller entities became larger conglomerate entities, the concept of the Nation-State evolved further, empires were created, and it was not until world conflicts arose that it was thought necessary to introduce things like identification documents and border controls.

Such governmental changes are beyond the scope of this report. Rather, what we should note is that debates on multiculturalism and immigration accompanied each of these changes. This must be the case, because each period of change involves fundamental questions of national identity. In each period, some have embraced change and some have attempted to reject it. This resistance is healthy, because although change cannot be prevented, it keeps extreme and unwise measures from being enacted. It also needs to be noted that there is a time lag: institutional change lags behind societal change by about 10-20 years.

Let's pause now to consider the indicators that show us that global change is happening:

- 1) Climate change. In the light of recent studies the arguments of opponents to climate change theories have essentially collapsed. Recent events have also accelerated the perceived need to embrace renewable power and new sources of power. Carbon sequestration as a stop-gap measure also seems to be essential.
- 2) Globalisation. There has been an increasing trend for isolated nation-states to collapse. Unified international action has been much faster. In Europe, South America and Africa, larger conglomerate entities are swiftly emerging. In the case of nations such as Australia, our laws are increasingly determined by adherence to international treaties and agreements that are necessary to keep us a part of the family of nations. People, especially the young, are increasingly not bound to one nation but relocate many times during the course of a life.
- 3) Information sharing. Increasingly, all types of information, from commodities to personal information, is shared. Facebook, with more than 500 million *active* users, is larger than any nation on earth.
- 4) New technologies are developing. Computers are increasingly woven into every aspect of life, and their operation is increasingly intuitive. New technologies will give us increasing interaction by body

movements and facial expression. New means of generating power and of growing food are in development.

5) Surveillance society, along with increased swapping by governments on information about citizens. It isn't easy to see where this is going. On the one hand, surveillance of citizens is a technique employed by societies that are losing control. On the other hand, the historical trend has been for more information about citizens to be kept.

Now let us consider the implications of this for multiculturalism. Because the dialogue of change is ongoing, and the outcomes are unclear, the African Think Tank can no more offer solutions than can anyone else. All that can be done is to point out some necessities and some directions of concern.

10.1 MULTICULTURALISM vs. MIXED MONOCULTURE

Although we have so far argued that Australia has been multicultural since its inception, this term is really a misnomer. Australia, has since its inception, been populated by people whose roots are a mixture of races and cultures. However, in terms of our institutions and administration, they are still essentially locked into an Anglic structure. People of other races and backgrounds have been incorporated into the system by adopting the existing cultural values.

Essentially, most of the administration and infrastructure of Australia is a legacy infrastructure from the industrial period. To take one example, let us look at the public transport structure within Victoria. Most of the rail system is essentially Victorian, and the day-to-day operation is outdated: there is not even a centralised control system that gives minute-by-minute updates on trains. The bus system relies on continual patching and many areas are badly served. Some things that have been kept are very successful: the tram system, essentially a legacy from the Victorian era, is much envied by other cities worldwide that abandoned trams, as well as being loved by the population at large. The taxi system is undergoing a review by Professor Alan Fels that will probably recommend some radical changes. As a general comment, the public transport system over the past 5-10 years has really lost its ability to cope. This can be compared to, for example, Germany or Singapore, where visionary and massive investment in rail and bus systems has produced public transport that is efficient and that therefore generates the degree of patronage necessary to operate economically.

Therefore we need to consider what we really mean by multiculturalism. Essentially multiculturalism:

- 1) Allows people of whatever race, culture or background to participate in society as full members
- 2) Has institutions that are flexible and in which all types of citizens are represented
- 3) Allows the co-existence of a variety of institutions or other societal structures

In other words, our definition of multiculturalism must change. Whereas at present multiculturalism essentially means mixed monoculture, we must move to a definition of multiculturalism as co-existent plurality.

For Australia to survive and continue to thrive into the new era, this is essential. We must change, because the world is changing. The leaders of the coming century will be those nations that have the flexibility, in their structures and in their people, to be able to introduce necessary change. Moreover, in an era of global engagement, we must empower all of our citizens so that those who have the necessary linguistic skills, cultural understanding, and contacts to be able to engage with people of other nationalities and cultures, have the ability to do so.

10.2 MOVING FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC

This is just to point out the larger philosophical implications of the area that we live in. Now we need to consider specific points that need to be engaged.

10.2.1 Non-Acceptance Of People Of Colour

Following the argument of Giambattista Vico that things develop from their roots, we can observe that the opinion of early settlers was that black people were non-people. The traces of this still remain within our national culture. The living conditions of indigenous people continue in many places at a level that would shame many developing countries.

People of colour of Pacific Island and African origin who migrate to Australia consistently report that they feel excluded from our culture. This may be compared to our response to people of Asian origin. Large-scale Chinese migration during the Gold Rush era was met with bigotry and rejection. Laws were passed to prevent the immigration of wives and family members. The White Australia policy was originally aimed at Asians. Despite a softening of this attitude, Vietnamese migration during the '70's-'80's also met with racist responses. Nowadays, there has been great improvement, and most migration is now from Asia. Nevertheless, the African Think Tank's collaboration with Asian communities at local level have revealed many instances of racist attitudes by workers from white-dominated councils. The leaders of these communities often consider that it is better publicly to downplay the existence of racism, but in private they cite many examples.

The situation for people of colour is more severe. They encounter much prejudice on a daily level.

How may this be countered? Below, we give examples of institutional change and community empowerment. However, in the context of this point, what we need first is to clearly demonstrate the existence of racist attitudes. There should be funded some scientific studies, based not on surveys, but on a comparison of involuntary reactions to images of different races and cultures. That research may in turn give us better avenues to defuse racist attitudes in a non-confrontational manner.

10.2.2 The Conservatism Of Institutions

Looking now at institutions, it is easy to observe that few are racially mixed or truly reflect the makeup of the Australian community. Increased conservatism is apparent as one moves from Federal to State to Local levels:

i) The most mixed institutions are national institutions that are required to operate in a frame serving people of mixed culture. So Centrelink has at least at the lower levels, quite a good mix. Other federal

departments, such as the Federal Police, are somewhat failing in their uptake of people from different communities.

ii) State institutions have a poorer uptake, with NSW and Victoria being the best.

iii) Local councils are notoriously monocultural, and this applies as much or more to councils that operate within very multicultural areas. Though there is the occasional election of leaders who are of mixed communities, the regular council staff are overwhelmingly of white background and are out of touch with the needs of their communities. Some councils could even be best described as being at war with their communities. In probably most cases where multicultural officers are employed in specific roles, their degree of acceptance and integration is often low, in fact little more than tokenism.

iv) Businesses vary according to the age of the business and the nature of the product. Sunshine industries have a high uptake of people from multicultural backgrounds. Institutions such as banks and insurance have a low uptake.

v) Within all types of service NGOs, uptake is for the most part poor. Some well-funded NGOs have a stated objective of pushing a particular religious or cultural approach. However, it cannot be said that non-religious NGOs are in general better than religious ones. For example, the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, and at times the Society of St Vincent de Paul, as well as Wesley Mission, have clear policies and strategies of human equality that are at the bedrock of their values. This has caused them to generate some services that are well-staffed with a racial/cultural mix and in general attempt to serve communities without prejudice. Many communities of different religious or cultural values actually find these services accepting and easy to work with. ***Therefore, to deprive institutions of funding on the grounds that they have a religious base, is short-sighted and certainly would not be supported by most multicultural communities.***

Historically, these types of embedded institutional restriction have only been effectively combated by formal legislative and/or funding-related requirements to diversify their intake. This requires them to adjust their policies and intake methods. In the specific case of local Councils, more definite measures may be indicated. This is a case similar to Telstra, where a monolithic culture could only be tackled by breaking it up. The African Think Tank believes that some councils should be dissolved, combined, or pass under centralised administration.

10.2.3 Changes To Funding.

The changes to funding that are needed have been fairly well covered in section 7, so we will content ourselves with reiterating the main points.

i) Present funding models stress projects over workers. In fact, it is often specifically stated that a project will be funded, but not ongoing administrative costs or wages.

This is utterly absurd. Would we say to Centrelink, for example, or to the Society of St Vincent de Paul: “You can have the money for projects but no money to fund offices or workers.” Of course not. Projects cannot be implemented without workers. Workers need to be maintained in employment

through the course of many projects. If the workers are there, they will generate projects, plans, and strategies that serve their communities. At present, valuable, critical people are being lost every day because the funding is not there to support them. This *is completely nonsensical and must be changed*.

ii) More funding needs to go to workers within the communities themselves, as opposed to outside administrators;

ii) The communities need to be encouraged in every way to employ administrators and others from the wider community. Volunteer support monies should also include people from the wider communities.

11. CONCLUSION

This report is of necessity brief. It was not generated by academics, but by volunteers at the grassroots level. There is more research that needs to be done. Nevertheless, the African Think Tank is convinced that the points made are valid, important, and must form a basis for Australia's cultural and migration strategy for the coming century.

The African Think Tank thanks you for your consideration and study of our report.