

Memo to:

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

From:

Strathalbyn Caledonian Society Inc
PO box 202
Strathalbyn S.A. 5255

Re:

INQUIRY INTO MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA

The Strathalbyn Caledonian Society Inc. acknowledges receipt of the Joint Standing Committee's letter of 18th February 2011 inviting submissions to the current Inquiry.

We would make the following comments.

- **The contribution of diaspora communities.**

The number, the variety and the robust durability of societies established in Australia over at least the last 150 years, celebrating and enhancing the Celtic tradition of many migrants, provide incontestable evidence of the strength of the continuing relationships with the cultural traditions of their homelands. These relationships will continue to be fostered informally by the activities of individuals and by the initiatives of small groups such as our own.

But there is an opportunity to capitalise on this foundation at a Regional, a State or even a National level from time to time, by lending well-targeted formal government support to encourage initiatives designed to bring visitors from the Celtic homelands to Australia. The year 2010 was designated a year of Homecoming to Scotland, and another such series of events is planned for 2014. This model might successfully be adopted, in reverse, to establish a series of festivals and events to attract visitors to celebrate the Celtic heritage in Australia.

We suggest to the Inquiry that it recommend strong support for initiatives of this kind which may in future arise from any of Australia's many cultural groups.

- **The profile of skilled migration**

We are aware of the competing, and even conflicting, factors influencing the quantum and the composition of the migrant intake over any given period. **We would, however, encourage the Inquiry to recommend in very strong terms that skilled migrants should consistently comprise a very high proportion of the total.**

To optimise the benefits to the individual skilled migrants and to the community in which they find work, the skills acquired in their country of origin must be recognised. **We urge the Inquiry to recommend ways in which this essential result can be achieved speedily and with minimum bureaucratic complexity.**

It was recently reported that a very significant proportion of the Australian labour force are lacking in what can be considered a basic level of literacy and numeracy appropriate to twenty-first century technology, In this context we suggest **that the Inquiry recommend ways in which migrants whose first language is not English can be given access to, and incentives to benefit from, language training which is designed to give them a competence in communication well above mere survival level.**