



Australian Youth  
Affairs Coalition

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Committee Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

April 21<sup>st</sup> 2011

Dear Ms Vamvakinou,

**Re: Inquiry into Multiculturalism**

AYAC welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia. In particular, we wish to endorse the perspectives conveyed in the submission developed by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network's (MYAN). As the national peak body for young people and the youth sector, AYAC supports the MYAN in its role as the national policy and advocacy body on multicultural youth issues.

AYAC aims to represent the rights and interests of young people at a national and international level, promote the well-being of young Australians, promote the fuller participation of young people in Australian society, and to provide policy advice to government and the broader community on issues affecting young people and the youth sector.

We believe that multiculturalism must be incorporated into the Government's social inclusion agenda, for it to genuinely provide a framework for social and economic inclusion for all.

AYAC supports the establishment of the Australian government's 'The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy' as an important step forward in building on the government's social inclusion agenda for the future.

AYAC supports the MYAN's statement that this policy framework "is central to a meaningful social inclusion agenda – one that celebrates Australia's ethnic and cultural diversity as a strength, and understands the importance of this to belonging and national identity for all Australians".

As suggested by Francis and Cornfoot (2007), for young people from multicultural backgrounds, identity formation is influenced by a sense of belonging in terms of nationality, cultural identity and family, and by the response from the broader society to themselves and to their community.<sup>1</sup> This points to the heritage of young Australians as being as important to them as their identification as Australians.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis S. and Cornfoot S. (2007) *Multicultural Youth in Australia: Settlement and Transition*. Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues. pp 24.

With regard to settlement programs that support the full participation of migrants in Australian society, AYAC believes in the importance of youth-specific settlement programs that are targeted to the particular needs of young people.

Specifically, AYAC supports the recommendations for youth specific settlement programs articulated in the MYAN submission:

- School and community-based programs that promote positive images of culturally diverse young people and combat racism and discrimination.
- Community-based leadership and/or mentoring programs with a focus on the development of skills and networks
- Group-based opportunities to engage with other young people from diverse backgrounds to explore multiculturalism, identity and belonging in Australia.
- Continuity of support (established in the development of the new settlement framework) for young humanitarian entrants across all stages of the settlement services system. This includes a discreet focus on young people in the Settlement Grants Program. This would provide refugee and newly arrived young people with more comprehensive support within the first 5 years of arrival in Australia in order to participate and contribute to life in Australia.
- Programs and activities that bring families together to discuss Australian laws, customs, rights and responsibilities.
- Initiatives that build the capacity of the youth and family sectors to (i) support families to negotiate parenting in a cross-cultural context and (ii) supports young people (in the context of family relationships) to navigate cross-cultural identity.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me further.

Yours sincerely,

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**Executive Director**

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