

Submission into the inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

I believe there is a place for multiculturalism in specific situations, while in other situations this is not warranted. To this end I would distinguish two main groups who might differ from the host culture:

Permanent immigrants

I myself am a migrant who came out as an 11 years old, and from the beginning my parents insisted that our migration required our family to adopt the host culture. To them it made perfect sense that they, as permanent migrants, should seek to live according to the customs of the land. Of course this did not mean that we did not seek share useful insights from our first culture, but only with the idea of enriching the host culture, not to replace it. I believe my parents were right, and that this should be the required attitude of all permanent migrants: adopt the host culture, but seek to enrich it. Customs that reasonably offend the host culture should not be continued or introduced.

Multicultural candidates

There are people, I believe, who are in different categories. These include:

1. **People who are indigenous to the country in the sense that they pre-dated the European migrations.** I believe the Aborigine population should be free to retain all, or such elements as they choose, of their former culture(s), including the language(s). Efforts should be made for them to practise this in freedom. They should also be encouraged to share in the formation of the general Australian culture.
2. **Refugees who are not going to be permanent migrants.** I believe we should have a greater openness to refugees who are seeking temporary exile in this country, encouraging them to train their children in their own cultural ways and values to facilitate their return home in better times. In returning they can be a catalyst in their own culture to encourage the changes needed to correct what made them refugees in the first place.

However, I do believe that refugees who, upon request, are approved for permanent migration should be asked to signify their desire to adopt Australian ways. While they should be granted freedom to practice their religion, they must be required to foreswear and religious and cultural practices that are contrary to our laws or would violently seek to change our culture (e.g. no polygamy, or Sharia law).

Reasons for my position against general multiculturalism:

For seventeen years I worked in African nations plagued by tribalism, which demonstrated to me the difficulties and impracticalities of multiculturalism. In these countries those who are educated are in general agreement that tribalism must go if the nation is to prosper. While they have pride in the cultural achievements of their forebears, they realise customs must either be shared, or allowed to lapse where these cause offence or misunderstanding. The reason are:

1. Multiculturalism easily leads to offence where customs are misunderstood or where there is a clash of values (e.g. what is a gift to one is a bribe to another, depending on culture).
2. It leads to a lowest common denominator type of morality (“why should I do it when they don’t do it”)
3. It leads to divisions within society that stifle a healthy democratic national community.

Respectfully submitted,