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To the Committee Secretariat  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

20 April 2011

Doc No:

Dear Sir / Madam

**Re: Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia - Submission**

It is with pleasure and hope that the City of Greater Geelong is hereby writing this submission.

As we commend the Federal Government initiative for multiculturalism in Australia, we also request the Federal Government to work in partnership with all levels of government, in particular the local government. Hence our submission covers the following three key areas from where we strongly believe positive outcomes may flow:

1. Strong and Meaningful Partnership
2. Resourcing
3. Productive Capacity

The ongoing commitment, collaborative approach and application of best practice initiatives / models in the area of multiculturalism will see Australia as one of the leaders for achievements in multicultural affairs. We believe it all starts locally.

Yours sincerely

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MANAGER

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Attach: Submission - Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

# **SUBMISSION FROM THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION INQUIRY INTO MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA**

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## **Premise for our response**

The City of Greater Geelong strongly supports Multiculturalism in Australia. Empirical research has evidenced the benefits of Multiculturalism in Australia. The City recognises and respects the cultural and economic benefits brought by multiculturalism. With increased mobility around the world, Multiculturalism goes beyond the cultural and economic benefits. It now ensures the future of stable nations.

To this respect, we highly commend the Federal Government policy: *The People of Australia – Australia's Multicultural Policy*.

The City of Greater Geelong has a long history of supporting Multiculturalism. Council, via several platforms, implements services and programs which work toward a connected community where everybody can fully participate in the civic life of the municipality. Council has recently adopted a diversity policy and Multicultural Action Plan (MAP).

The diversity policy and MAP have been advised by the Geelong community and shaped by members of a MAP Working Group which has representatives from various organisations and community groups including, Geelong Interfaith Network, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Geelong Ethnic Communities Council, Multicultural Aged Care Services and Victoria Police.

The 35 actions in the MAP will shape the City's response and support to the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) over the next four years, underpinned by a whole of Council approach to cultural diversity. In developing the MAP, the City conducted community consultations and engaged with community groups, government and non government organisations. This forms the basis for the City to work collaboratively during the implementation of the MAP.

The key components of the City of Greater Geelong response, within the terms of reference provided and relating to the Commonwealth Government Inquiry into Multiculturalism, are as follows:

## **Strong and Meaningful Partnership**

We urge the Federal Government to ensure that the Multicultural Policy has practical outcomes. One of the ways is to ensure engagement with local government via a strong and meaningful partnership to deal with multiculturalism at a local level, be it settlement and participation, national productive capacity within a social inclusion framework or addressing other aspects of multiculturalism.

Local Government's localised perspectives on multiculturalism will ensure a realistic picture of "Multiculturalism in Action" which will, among other things, positively affect local communities' life, skill shortages, reduce social cost and achieve successful settlement outcomes.

## **Resourcing**

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has been until recently the main provider of and responsible for settlement services and in large part, multiculturalism. There has not been as such a partnership approach with all three levels of government to multiculturalism. Local Government is seen to be that level of government closest to the community who look toward their local Council for support and leadership in multicultural affairs.

DIAC has been disbursing Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) and Settlement Grants Program (SGP) funding, mostly secured by Migrant Resource Center's or non for profit organisations. These funds can be limited in terms of their prescriptive nature. The nature of the funding, mostly for two or three years, can mean initiatives and programs are not sustainable, services and support become competitive especially among various regions who want to attract mostly the skilled migrants, and the element of trust and relationship building between service

recipients and service providers can be unstable, to start all over again with another provider. This in turn increasingly puts pressure on local government to provide for its multicultural communities, be they refugee humanitarian entrants, International Students, Unaccompanied Refugee Minors, ageing established skill migrants or recently arrived skilled migrants.

Geelong, being in a rural regional area attracts and recruits skill migrants to fill our skill shortages. Federal Government support is sought in terms of resourcing and funding. Geelong has the required knowledge and expertise locally to understand and address the needs of the CALD community and enjoys the trust and strong relationships with the community and agencies working in this area.

Local Government also has the ability to ensure actions and activities to achieve community peace and harmony. This is a very important area for a three level government partnership approach to achieve community harmony as well as positive health and well being for new arrivals.

### **Productive Capacity**

Local Government is increasingly required to lead by example in many areas. One such area for the City of Greater Geelong is a representative workforce which reflects the population of Geelong. There are many refugee / humanitarian entrants and skilled migrants (SIR visa holders – Skilled Independent Regional) who have several Australian qualifications but have been unable to secure stable employment in the relevant areas. Consequently, the need to have employment pathways and volunteering opportunities for the CALD community is vital to assist in building understanding of the systems, supporting connection and enabling participation in the economy.

The lack of interpreting and translating services in rural and regional areas, in terms of access and cost, is a substantial issue. Federal Government assistance to Local Government is fundamental from an access and equity perspective, as well as providing a fair go to those groups marginalised and disadvantaged through language barriers. This will ensure enhanced participation in the economic life of the local community and increase productive capacity in many areas where rural and regional areas can immensely benefit.

### **Conclusion**

We urge the Commonwealth Government to look at practical policy outcomes, strong and meaningful partnership with Local Government for a stronger, connected, healthy and productive multifaceted and multicultural community.

As trends in community needs are changing, so should responses, at all levels of government. The City of Greater Geelong encourage the Commonwealth Government consider the NSW Government Multiculturalism framework which is a model imbedded in legislations providing mandatory reporting requirements on achievements for agencies on Multicultural Affairs.