

Chapter 4

Political leadership and education

4.1 Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard that the discourse and behaviour of political leaders has the capacity to influence community perspectives about culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia submitted:

How their leaders respond is crucial to how the country resolves its tensions. Good leadership quells unrest; it provides means of understanding for those between whom division exists. It facilitates dialogue when relations become strained; it corrects misinformation and guides debate. Good leaders appeal to Australians' sense of fairness and to the inherent sense of decency that has created the successful multicultural society that is Australia.¹

4.2 The Victorian Government further suggested that there is an opportunity to recast public and media discussion, and '[set] the tone for respectful and civil dialogue' to strengthen multiculturalism in Australia.²

4.3 This chapter discusses the impact of political leadership on the treatment of and regard for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It also examines the way in which education can be used to strengthen and protect multiculturalism and social inclusion in Australia.

Political intent

4.4 Participants of the inquiry informed the committee that a sequence of recent policy decisions appeared to communicate tacit messages about the government's stance on multiculturalism. Witnesses gave the example of the government's shifted focus from migration and multiculturalism toward an emphasis on 'national security' and 'de-radicalisation' programs.³ Resources previously assigned to diversity and social cohesion initiatives have been reallocated to 'countering extreme violence', and the government's public promotion of multiculturalism has had a significantly muted profile.⁴

4.5 Mr Dominic Ofner from the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education noted that the government's silence about multicultural policy for a number

1 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 7.

2 Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 10.

3 See, for example, Professor Fethi Mansouri, Director, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation and UNESCO Chair, Comparative Research in Cultural Diversity and Social Justice, Deakin University, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 54; Professor Andrew Jakubowicz and Ms Ly Ly Lim, *Submission 8*, pp. 7–8.

4 Professor Fethi Mansouri, Director, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation and UNESCO Chair, Comparative Research in Cultural Diversity and Social Justice, Deakin University, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 54.

of years has been negatively perceived by the community, and that the long awaited release of the multicultural statement in March 2017 demonstrates that multiculturalism is 'not a priority'.⁵

4.6 Witnesses and submitters also referred to the Attorney-General's announcement on 21 March 2017 to repeal sections 18C and 18D of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*,⁶ occurring during Harmony Day celebrations, which aim to promote cultural diversity and cultural respect. According to the Chinese Australian Services Society, the timing of the announcement 'marginalised and denigrated the values of Multiculturalism'.⁷

4.7 Some witnesses told the committee that political leaders' failure to condemn racism and discriminatory language is just as damaging as if the leaders themselves had propagated it. Participants were particularly concerned that the government had not made strong public statements to counter domestic and international policies that are seemingly at odds with principles of multiculturalism. Examples cited include the United States' decision to ban the entry of individuals from Muslim majority countries; statements made by Senator Pauline Hanson about Asian and Muslim immigrants; and inflammatory comments by both sides of politics with regard to free speech, citizenship, and refugees.⁸ In its submission, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights stated:

The cruellest aspect of racism, it is said, lies not so much in the direct abuse, but in the tolerance of that racism shown by society's elite.⁹

4.8 In the context of anti-mosque protests in Bendigo, Professor Andrew Markus referred to the 'failure of Australian multiculturalism', caused by a lack of political leadership and engagement:

How was it a failure?...It was a failure of leadership in that leading federal politicians and ministers did not come to Bendigo; they did not consult or involve themselves, as far as I have been able to determine. State level involvement was limited and probably not on messaging...there was a failure of leadership and a failure to articulate clear messages, but there was also a sense that people were not being listened to, and this fed into the increasing alienation from politics.¹⁰

5 Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 4.

6 The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, Prime Minister for Australia, and Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC, Attorney-General, 'Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill', *Media release*, 21 March 2017.

7 Chinese Australian Services Society, *Submission 30*, p. 6.

8 See, for example, Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 13; Mr George Said, *Submission 66*, [p. 1]; Chinese Community Council of Australia, *Submission 11*, p. 1.

9 Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 14.

10 Professor Andrew Markus, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 19.

4.9 Some witnesses accused political leaders as viewing multiculturalism as an opportunity to 'score political points', rather than being 'a genuine political commitment' to reduce racism.¹¹ Many expressed disappointment that political rhetoric has vastly strayed from the original recommendations made in the 1978 Report of the Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants (*Galbally Report*), which espoused values of equal opportunity, free expression of culture, and access to services.¹²

Far right politics

4.10 Internationally, there has been an increase in the number of far right political parties speaking out against multiculturalism. The committee made note of the Jobbik party in Hungary which describes itself as a 'principled conservative and radically patriotic Christian party' that is focused on preserving 'Hungarian values and interests'.¹³ Other examples can be found in the polling results of the French election, whereby conservative candidate Marine Le Pen gained public support based on her hard-line stance on immigration.¹⁴

4.11 Witnesses told the committee that the increasing attention paid to far right politics has had a particularly negative impact on those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales stated:

Our more than 300 members have become increasingly concerned with the prominent movements aiming to countenance Australia's long-standing pro-immigration and pro-multiculturalism policies, likewise reflected in similar nations worldwide, following the rise of extremist and far-right elements within governing institutions both in Australia and abroad.¹⁵

4.12 Professor Andrew Markus remarked that intolerant and racist attitudes have become 'a political reality...We have one political party now that caters to that constituency'.¹⁶

11 See, for example, Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 7; Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

12 See, for example, Professor Andrew Jakubowicz and Ms Ly Ly Lim, *Submission 8*, p. 6; Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 20.

13 The All Hungary Media Group, *Jobbik confident of winning EP seat, party leader says*, <http://www.politics.hu/20090513/jobbik-confident-of-winning-ep-seat-party-leader-says/> (accessed 16 August 2017).

14 Reuters, "'I will protect you!' Marine Le Pen vows to end all immigration to France if elected president', *The Telegraph*, 18 April 2017.

15 Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales, *Submission 15*, p. 1. Also see: Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

16 Professor Andrew Markus, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 20.

4.13 The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education criticised the use of 'coded' language by the major political parties which alluded to anti-immigration policies proposed in other countries:

...the Labor Party has been rightly criticised for an advertisement in which leader Bill Shorten promised to “build Australian first, buy Australian first and employ Australians first” while surrounded by a group that did not include a single person of colour. The advertisement sends a simplistic and coded message to people that unemployment and underemployment can be fixed by reducing visas for migrant workers. Indeed, even if the Labor Party were to include more diversity in the advertisement, it does not detract from the anti-immigration tone of the advertisement; “Country first” messaging has been used by far-right political parties and anti-immigration candidates in elections around the world, including by US President Donald Trump.¹⁷

4.14 Witnesses and submitters advised that, despite the increase of anti-immigration voices in the Australian Parliament, these political leaders did not accurately represent the thoughts and feelings of mainstream Australia.¹⁸ They called for more cohesive leadership by politicians from each of the major parties to present a unified stance on multicultural issues and quell the divisive policies suggested by the far right:

It is essential that the major parties show moral leadership and use best endeavours to achieve and maintain consensus on multiculturalism and immigration. Partisan divisions over these policy areas are open to exploitation by fringe groups seeking to promote racism, which works against any social inclusion agenda.¹⁹

Impact of political language

4.15 The Executive Council of Australian Jewry stated that political leaders have 'a concomitant responsibility...to exercise a high degree of rhetorical virtue by avoiding language that is likely to inflame overt or latent hatreds and prejudices within the community'.²⁰

4.16 However, participants suggested that inflammatory political discourse blurring issues of national security and border protection with multicultural affairs have become increasingly prevalent in recent years.²¹

17 Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 14.

18 Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 5. Also see: Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, *Submission 7*, p. 5.

19 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 8.

20 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 11. Also see: Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

21 See, for example, Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Submission 16*, pp. 2–3; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 7.

4.17 Witnesses and submitters suggested that Australians' demand for political direction has been met by simplistic solutions, directing blame to immigrants, refugees, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities as 'scapegoats'.²² An example presented to the committee was that of one Minister's comments with regard to the literacy and numeracy skills of incoming migrants:

'They [refugees] won't be numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English...these people would be taking Australian jobs...For many of them that would be unemployed, they would languish in unemployment queues and on Medicare and the rest of it so there would be huge cost.'²³

4.18 Some participants commented that such tactics had also been used in past elections when discussing issues of population, unemployment and the housing crisis (as discussed in chapter three).²⁴ They argued that this form of rhetoric paints an over-simplistic picture of migrants and refugees' integration into Australian life:

The way in which Australian politicians play “the race card”—explicitly or implicitly—has serious implications for multiculturalism. When political leaders call for an outright for a ban on Muslim immigration or subtly blame migrant workers for unemployment, stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes are normalised. When these attitudes are normalised, more serious language and behaviour become accepted.²⁵

4.19 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia stated:

The effects of this can be devastating to social cohesion. It can undo years, even decades, of community commitment to harmonious inter-existence.²⁶

4.20 Witnesses warned that the impact of negative political rhetoric also has an influence on perpetrators of racial vilification. When public comments are made about minority communities, individuals may view the comments as validation of their prejudices.²⁷ This can fuel division within the community and even lead to violence:

It can also embolden them to take actions against the target group, whether verbally or physically. At worst, they see it as verbally licensing them to act

22 Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 13.

23 Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 12.

24 See, for example, Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 6; Ms Isabel Lo, Founder, Media Diversity Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 34; Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 17.

25 Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 4. Also see: Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 14.

26 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 7.

27 Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 7.

against the target group, and there is no limit on the actions they are willing to take.²⁸

4.21 Mr Dominic Ofner of the ERC told the committee:

From our research, when a minister for immigration makes those comments or announces changes to the citizenship test and singles out the Sudanese community and the Apex gangs, that legitimises attitudes in the community from non-migrant backgrounds, at a grass-roots level, that might provoke racial discrimination, intolerance or prejudice towards those people.²⁹

4.22 Witnesses and submitters observed that a Parliamentary Code of Race Ethics has been previously proposed in Parliament. The Code was first proposed in 1996, and by December 1998, more than half of all senators and members had provided their signature.³⁰ A similar version of the Code was put forward by the Labor Party in 2016 but has not come to fruition.³¹

Proactive leadership

4.23 The committee was presented with a number of positive examples of political leadership, demonstrating the role of public figures in strengthening and promoting multiculturalism in Australia.

4.24 Witnesses told the committee that in 2009, Australia received a great deal of negative attention in the Indian media following a spate of attacks against Indian students. This led to a dramatic decline in the number of students from India enrolling in Australian universities and raised questions about Australians' attitudes to multiculturalism.³² In response, the government engaged heavily with the Indian Government, as well as with the Indian community in Australia. Settlement Services International commended these actions in sending 'strong messages that discrimination is not acceptable or tolerated' in Australia.³³

4.25 Ms Ly Ly Lim gave another example:

The then Premier of Victoria, Jeff Kennett, was the only conservative political leader to stand up and strongly condemn Ms Hanson on her anti-

28 Ms Ly Ly Lim, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 2. Also see: Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

29 Mr Dominic Ofner, Coordinator of Campaigns and Development, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 5.

30 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 11.

31 Katharine Murphy, 'Race ethics code: Shorten challenges Turnbull to put Labor proposal to Coalition MPs', *The Guardian*, 16 November 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/16/shorten-turnbull-labor-race-ethics-code-coalition> (accessed 16 August 2017).

32 Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, p. 7. Also see: Ellen Whinnett and Tawqeer Hussain, 'Indian student numbers plunge after fresh attack', *Herald Sun*, 5 January 2014, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/indian-student-numbers-plunge-after-fresh-attack/news-story/193d86e790b3faa8eef8760bc928bdd8> (accessed 16 August 2017).

33 Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, p. 9.

Asian remarks. Following this, a number of opinion polls were conducted and they consistently revealed that attitudes towards ethnic communities were more positive in Victoria compared to other states, which had declined dramatically.³⁴

4.26 Many witnesses and submitters made reference to the Victorian Government's multicultural policy statement titled '*Victorian. And proud of it.*' as an outstanding example of positive political leadership in the area of multiculturalism and social inclusion.³⁵ According to the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, the government's statement sends a message of inclusivity, and recognises the contribution of culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.³⁶

4.27 The Federal Government's recent multicultural statement—*Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful*—was similarly perceived as a positive step to reaffirm support for cultural diversity and set out strategic priorities for multicultural policy.³⁷

Committee view

4.28 The committee notes that parliamentarians have previously pursued a proposal for a code of race ethics.³⁸ Previous versions of the code have promoted principles such as respect for religious and cultural diversity, tolerance, and justice, and asked parliamentarians to conduct parliamentary debate in a manner that is factual rather than inflammatory. The committee believes that a code of ethics sets an appropriate standard for public discourse, particularly when discussing issues relating to multicultural affairs, migration, and citizenship, and would guide respectful public debate.

Recommendation 6

4.29 The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider developing and establishing a Parliamentary Code of Multicultural Ethics, requiring signature from all senators and members. The Code could include agreement to:

- **act in a manner that upholds the honour of public office and the Parliament;**
- **recognise the value and contribution of the First Peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;**

34 Ms Ly Ly Lim, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 2.

35 See, for example, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 43*, p. 8; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., *Submission 47*, p. 6.

36 Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 8.

37 See, for example, Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 1; Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, p. 9; Australian Multicultural Foundation, *Submission 31*, [p. 2]; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 6; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 51*, p. 6.

38 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 192, 2 July 1998, pp. 4837–4838.

- **respect Australians' diversity of colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;**
- **recognise the value and contribution of culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities;**
- **reject discriminatory or exclusionary statements;**
- **uphold values of social inclusion, tolerance, and respect for all persons, regardless of colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief; and**
- **encourage the partnership of government and non-government organisations in leading constructive, informed and factually-correct debate in the community.**

Strengthening multiculturalism through education

4.30 Over the last few decades, Australia has welcomed a vast diversity of cultures, religions, and worldviews, but participants of the inquiry argued that this is yet to be reflected in the education curriculum. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) currently offer students in all schools the opportunity to learn about religions, spirituality and ethical beliefs as a study 'about religion' rather than about a particular religious faith. The role and significance of religion in Australian society can also be taught in subjects such as history and civics and citizenship.³⁹

4.31 Many witnesses and submitters argued that enhancements to the education curriculum could assist in strengthening principles of multiculturalism in Australia and contribute to social cohesion outcomes.⁴⁰

4.32 Witnesses referred to the current Victorian Curriculum that highlights the importance of 'Learning about worldviews and religions'. They recommended developing a similar model for all states and territories, in consultation with educators, academic experts, and peak faith organisations such as those that are members of the Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations.⁴¹

4.33 The Executive Council of Australian Jewry suggested that rather than focusing on 'Australian values', the curriculum should promote enlightenment values and teach students to recognise and challenge prejudice:

This would provide a framework for giving students an insight into the validity of enlightenment values and undermine the potential appeal of simplistic, extremist ideologies. It would also provide a much-needed inoculation against racism and ideas of racial or religious supremacism, and more generally would better equip today's students and tomorrow's leaders to intelligently handle life's challenges and the country's challenges.⁴²

4.34 The committee heard that there is also a lack of comprehensive education about Australia's Indigenous culture and history. Witnesses noted that while there is some teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the school curriculum, new arrivals that participate in settlement education programs are not

39 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, *ACARA facts: Religion in the Australian Curriculum*, <http://www.acara.edu.au/news-and-media/acara-facts> (accessed 16 August 2017).

40 See, for example, Dr Anna Halafoff, Mr Andrew Singleton, Ms Mary Lou Rasmussen and Mr Gary D. Bouma, *Submission 28*, [p. 1]; Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 24; Professor Fethi Mansouri, *Submission 38*, p. 3.

41 Dr Anna Halafoff, Mr Andrew Singleton, Ms Mary Lou Rasmussen and Mr Gary D. Bouma, *Submission 28*, [p. 1]. Also see: Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 33.

42 Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 27. Also see: Mr Atem Dau Atem, Public Officer, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 43.

provided with the same level of instruction. Mr Atem Dau Atem, a former refugee, noted:

I think at the heart of it the whole system is built on colonisation. It is built on the dispossession of Indigenous people, which is very sad. The more sad thing is that we come and benefit from it. I went to university here. I learned. I have a job now. All that is built on the dispossession of Indigenous people. To me, that is the biggest problem. We cannot deal with these issues until we actually look at that and say: where did this institution come from? Where did the education system come from? We can say we do reform but in the end it is what is underpinning it. And this is not to say Australians are racist, because the current Australian people really have not done anything wrong except to maintain a system that they inherited, and it is the system at the heart of it that is the problem. What can we do about it? Maybe what [a representative from Settlement Services International] was saying: learn about Indigenous people, which we do not do in the settlement centre. We do not do that at all, because we are not funded to do that. Nobody gets money to do anything like that.⁴³

4.35 The Victorian Multicultural Commission expressed the view that a stronger education program would enhance Australia's cultural understanding of both existing and incoming cultural groups.⁴⁴ In doing so, individuals can take the focus away from what is different and foreign, and direct it toward common values that build social inclusion and cohesion.⁴⁵

Languages education

4.36 Recognising the breadth of languages now spoken across Australia, a number of witnesses and submitters suggested the development of a national policy on languages.⁴⁶ Language education offers an opportunity 'window' to not only allow Australians to communicate with one another, but also encourage greater intercultural learning. A representative from the Australian Hellenic Council told the committee:

...the importance of learning a second language is phenomenal. Obviously, it encourages the student to travel, to learn another culture and to open their

43 Mr Atem Dau Atem, Public Officer, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 42.

44 See, for example, Ms Mandi Wicks, Director, Audio and Language Content, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 20; Mr Peter George Doukas, Chair, Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 28; Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 28.

45 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Strengthening Social Cohesion: Meeting Community Needs*, May 2016, p. 14. Also see: Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 5.

46 See, for example, Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 12; Mr George Alexander Vellis, Coordinator, Australian Hellenic Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 29; Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 4; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, pp. 9–10.

mind, and that then comes into multiculturalism because there is a better understanding of what is happening around them.⁴⁷

4.37 The Australian Multicultural Council noted the economic benefits of implementing a national language policy:

A National Policy on Languages would assist with implementation of the Government's productivity agenda, by not only encouraging second and third generation migrants to maintain their language skill base but also introducing native English speakers to the transformative power associated with learning another language.⁴⁸

4.38 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia told the committee that a national language policy that encompassed language rights, language maintenance and language study has the potential to enrich Australia's economic, social and intellectual dividends.⁴⁹

Cultural literacy

4.39 A number of participants noted the significance of 'cultural literacy' in strengthening multiculturalism and social cohesion.⁵⁰ Emeritus Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM gave an explanation:

...you have some understanding of the cultural diversity both of Australia and of the world, you feel comfortable with it, you know how to interact with it and you know how to gain advantage from it. Cultural literacy would, over time, then percolate through not only to schools, kindergartens and universities but also to other sections of society, because that educational foundational exists.⁵¹

4.40 Dr Irene Bouzo from the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria suggested viewing multiculturalism through an 'intercultural lens'. This recognises the skills and competencies of other cultures, such as the ability to speak another language, knowledge of religious practice, etc.⁵² Professor Camilleri noted that beneficiaries of an intercultural education would span across business, policy, security, community work, and medical services, through an increased understanding of 'the culturally diverse context within which they are working'.⁵³

47 Mr George Alexander Vellis, Coordinator, Australian Hellenic Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 29. Also see: Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 12.

48 Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 4.

49 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 10.

50 See, for example, Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 7; Professor Fethi Mansouri, *Submission 38*, p. 3; Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Submission 34*, p. 3.

51 Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 59.

52 Dr Irene Bouzo, Executive Officer, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, pp. 23–24.

53 Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 7.

4.41 The Australian Psychological Society further highlighted the social benefits of cultural literacy:

This research has demonstrated that communities are enriched and transformed by migrants and refugees and the skills, perspectives and traditions they bring, and that more intercultural contact among different ethnic groups can facilitate a more positive context for inter-ethnic relationships, understanding, collaboration and unity, which is a mutual win-win situation for individuals, communities and society.⁵⁴

Interfaith dialogue

4.42 Inquiry participants advised the committee that interfaith dialogue is an indispensable aspect of cultural literacy education. Australia is a nation of diverse religious affiliation,⁵⁵ and participants argued that greater understanding and facilitation of interfaith dialogue is required to improve public discourse about matters of race, ethnicity, culture and religion.⁵⁶ As the Federal Government's multicultural statement notes:

Regular inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue is critical to reduce the possibility of tensions within communities and to strengthen cohesion and harmony. Such dialogue helps to reduce prejudice, promote cross-cultural understanding, improve relations between different ethnic and religious groups, and enhance the sense of belonging and trust.⁵⁷

4.43 The Australian Bahá'í Community also submitted:

The worldwide Bahá'í experience suggests that more effective outcomes are achieved when decision-making and dialogue is approached as a shared effort to explore the underlying reality of relevant circumstances— a collective search for truth and common understanding.

...We have found that effective community-building processes amongst diverse peoples and populations --including Bahá'ís and others such as neighbours and friends -- require regular gatherings for consultation at all levels, allowing for those concerned with the well-being of their communities to openly and frankly explore their circumstances, reflect on their experiences, and decide on steps forward.⁵⁸

4.44 Representatives from the Bendigo Interfaith Council argued that governments need to recognise the importance of religion and faith for new arrivals. Monsignor Francis Marriott stated:

54 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 61*, p. 15.

55 Australian Bureau of Statistics, '2016 Census data reveals "no religion" is rising fast', *Media release 074/2017*, 27 June 2017.

56 See, for example, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 24; Ms Susan Ennis, *Submission 35*, p. 5; C8 Journey, *Submission 37*, p. 5.

57 Australian Government, *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful*, March 2017, p. 15.

58 Australian Bahá'í Community, *Submission 52*, pp. 2–3.

...we would like to emphasise there that faith plays a very important role in the settling of these new arrivals in our town. It's what they come with, as well as the food. In a world that sometimes thinks faith isn't important, our experience has been that its enormously important to these new arrivals. The Karen people, the Muslim people, the Hindu people, the Sikhs are all seeking to do something about their faith when they arrive.⁵⁹

4.45 The committee observed that there has been some response to the need for interfaith dialogue in Australia, including the Australian Multicultural Council's 2014 report titled *Interfaith and social cohesion in Australia: looking to the future*,⁶⁰ and the establishment of a number of interfaith organisations and networks.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Professor Camilleri noted that initiatives need to be proactive and sustainable in order to have any long-term effect:

Dialogue needs to explore the deeper social, economic, physical and psychological insecurities that people experience—including the insecurities that arise from migration, whether voluntary or forced. The purpose of dialogue is to identify the sources of insecurity, and to find agreement on constructive ways of dealing with such insecurities.⁶²

Anti-racism strategies

4.46 Witnesses and submitters further highlighted a need for community education about the harm caused by racial discrimination and vilification, and the influence of media and political leaders in perpetuating racist rhetoric. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry argued that students should be encouraged to think critically, adopting a 'sceptical and analytical approach to all information' before coming to a conclusion.⁶³

4.47 Participants also called for the government to maintain or increase funding for the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy (the Strategy),⁶⁴ in order to 'deeply penetrate' community attitudes toward racism and discrimination.⁶⁵

59 Monsignor Francis Marriott, Chair, Bendigo Interfaith Council, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 27.

60 Australian Multicultural Council, *Interfaith and social cohesion in Australia: looking to the future*, June 2014, p. 4.

61 Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 9.

62 Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM, *Submission 43*, p. 11.

63 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 10.

64 From 2012–16, the Strategy successfully led the development of a number of educative tools and resources to raise awareness about the prevalence of racism, and bolster understanding of how it can be prevented and reduced. Outputs included: What You Say Matters, an online anti-racism resource for young people; Strengthening Connections, a training resource addressing systemic racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using government services; The Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool, an audit tool for employers; RightsED, education resources for schools on racism and race relations; A National Forum on Diversity Training for police; and Building Social Cohesion in Our Communities, a resource for local government.

4.48 Some submitters indicated that the Strategy could be improved to better identify, prevent and reduce racism. For example, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry suggested that, as part of a review into existing school curricula, the Strategy 'should include a fully funded process for engaging school educators'.⁶⁶ RCOA contended that responses to racism should also focus on different geographical locations, noting differences in the way in which racism and discrimination manifest themselves across rural and urban locations:

Some rural and regional areas have a strong and well-established history of supporting migrants and refugees and other newcomers, whereas other communities may feel more threatened and respond differently to change and the diversifying of their local community. Ensuring that any anti-racism strategy includes local place-based initiatives as well as a broad national campaign will strengthen its impact overall.⁶⁷

Committee view

4.49 The committee recognises the social and economic value of a multilingual Australia. Through embracing the diversity of languages already present in Australian society, there is a tangible opportunity to not simply tolerate other cultures, but to recognise the inherent skills they contribute to Australia. The committee therefore encourages the Australian Government to consider developing a national policy on language education.

4.50 The committee further acknowledges the role of interfaith and intercultural understanding in promoting social cohesion, particularly considering Australia's religious and cultural profile in recent years. The committee notes that the current Australian Multicultural Council is tasked with 'promoting greater intercultural and interfaith understanding and dialogue'.⁶⁸ The committee's view is that this should be incorporated into a wider national policy of intercultural and multicultural education, including enhanced language policy, and cultural education in the Australian Curriculum.

Recommendation 7

4.51 The committee recommends that the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, in consultation with relevant government, non-government and community bodies, consider developing an intercultural and multicultural education curriculum to be delivered across a range of subjects including English, History, Geography, Science, Civics and Citizenship. The curriculum could include:

65 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 10. Also see: C8 Journey, *Submission 37*, p. 5.

66 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 10.

67 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, pp. 15–16.

68 Department of Social Services, *Australian Multicultural Council*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/australian-multicultural-council> (accessed 16 August 2017).

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- **compulsory language education for students at both the primary and secondary school level, delivered through the Australian Curriculum; and**
 - **comprehensive intercultural education for students at both the primary and secondary school level encompassing religion and religious practices, cultural traditions and sensitivities, and the social and economic value of cultural diversity.**

4.52 The committee notes the success of the National Anti-Discrimination Partnership and Strategy (the Strategy) in addressing and challenging racism and discrimination in everyday life. The outcomes of the 2015 evaluation report demonstrate that the Strategy has been effective in raising awareness of racism and how best to respond to it.⁶⁹ The committee supports the thematic analysis used to assess the activities carried out under the Strategy and believes that an ongoing review process will assist in maintaining the Strategy's effectiveness.

Recommendation 8

4.53 The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to provide ongoing support for the National Anti-Racism Strategy, through continuing to fund activities that raise public awareness and empower individuals and communities to prevent and reduce the incidence of racism, and promoting the Strategy at relevant opportunities.

- **The National Anti-Racism Strategy could incorporate a triennial review process, similar to the 2015 Evaluation and Future Direction Report, to assess the impact of promotional campaigns and educative tools and resources in starting conversations, sending a clear message, providing leadership, and empowering action against racism.**

69 Australian Human Rights Commission, *National Anti-Racism Strategy and Racism. It Stops with Me: Summary Evaluation and Future Direction*, June 2015, p. 45.

