

To: Committee Secretary,  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration.

From:

Any inquiry into "Multiculturalism" needs clarification of what that term denotes. My problem is that while I do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, country of origin, some cultural practices are abhorrent to me. For example female genital mutilation, betrothal of young children, polygamy, "honour" killings, acid attacks, cruelty to animals etc. Multiculturalism has blurred the distinction between race, ethnicity, religion so much so these days that any criticism of a barbaric cultural practice excites accusations of racism against the critic.

Rather than encouraging identification with Australia the way multiculturalism operates at present is to perpetuate a group ethnic mentality. Persons associate with those in their own ethnic group rarely interacting with those outside it. The husband of a friend of my wife and myself, until he met us, had never socialized with anyone outside the Croatian community. He is friendly with us but from my association with him it is obvious that he does not regard himself as an Australian. In Melbourne there are demonstrations by persons about overseas issues e.g. protests about Cyprus by persons of Greek descent [presumably], protests about Israel and Lebanon by persons of Arabic descent, and so on. While people have every right to peaceful protest in the Australian democracy, similar passion is not exhibited by these people about local issues. My contention is that there is a lack of interest and concern as far as this country is concerned even though they might have resided here for a long time. Multiculturalism and ethnic policies tend to encourage identification with the country of origin not Australia and to herd people into ethnic enclaves. There are suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne in which English is not the language heard, where signs are in foreign languages.

There are other multiracial societies such as Brazil, Hawaii where the people identify with the country they reside in not an ancestral land remote from their everyday existence.

In the United Kingdom, Germany multiculturalism has been declared a failure principally because certain immigrants have not integrated and will never do so. It is not an obligation of the host country to adapt to new arrivals- they need to respect the customs and way of life of those extending hospitality.

My wife and I at one time attended a support group. For us the experience was spoiled because at one end of the table certain ethnic women gabbled in their own language while an interpreter translated a guest speaker's remarks. These women were elderly and had resided in Australia for decades but had not bothered to learn English. They talked among themselves ignoring the "Anglos" and others at the table. A microcosm of the larger picture: ethnic enclaves in which English is not

spoken and where there is no interaction with the wider community.

The type of official reinforcement of this state of affairs I object to is exemplified by the local Council which in a handbook advertises "Greek women's " activity group. Other groups specifically for certain ethnicities. If a person has an interest in a particular activity then as a ratepayer he should not be limited to groups restricted to a certain ethnic group. If there is official blessing for segregation, then the chances of members of different ethnic backgrounds interacting and socializing are even more remote.

What is the objective of Government at Federal, State and Local Government levels? A nation of ethnic enclaves shut off from one another and encouraged to remain that way?

There are barbaric, primitive cultures out there in the wide world. Australians should not be expected to embrace such cultures in their entirety nor should a policy of multiculturalism require them to do so. Anyone who objects to abhorrent cultural practices should not be smeared with the epithet "racist".

"Multiculturalism" is an ambiguous, deficient term that needs to be scrapped and replaced by a more meaningful word without connotations of acceptance without question of any and every culture however cruel, barbaric and abhorrent.