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5 April 2011

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
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Canberra ACT 2600
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Dear Committee Secretary

Submission to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

What is multiculturalism?

Ask this of people on the street and you would get a range of different answers. Multiculturalism means different things to different people, groups and organisations. Even our governments use differing definitions.

One of the main principles behind multiculturalism, achieving a harmonious society made up of people of diverse cultures, is a worthy aim. Of course we all want to live in a peaceful and harmonious society. Already, Australia has benefited greatly from diversity.

But when multiculturalism leads us to allow people from other cultures to separate themselves and live apart from mainstream Australian society, to the detriment of our own unique Australian culture and way of life, then something is very wrong.

We see evidence of this in our own society and in societies overseas.

Recently many world leaders have spoken about the failure of multiculturalism in their own countries. Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy, David Cameron and Maxime Verhagen have, along with others, voiced their concerns.

A clear summary of these concerns was put forward by David Cameron:

Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We've even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values.¹

Europe, in particular, is currently experiencing the social unrest that arises when separation, not integration, is pursued under the guise of 'multiculturalism'. This is happening in the United Kingdom, France, Sweden, the Netherlands and other countries.

When migrants come to Australia we should, as Roger Scruton says, "welcome them into our culture, and not beside and against it."²

Australians should always be ready to say 'no' to isolation and separatism and 'yes' to embracing common values. What benefits come to our country when we encourage people to live apart from their fellow citizens? How does isolation help us to maintain a strong Australia that looks to the future with confidence?

While our nation's culture is drawn from many countries and customs, it is still one thing: it is a culture made up of a set of core values that we all share and that bind us together as Australians. We, "like everyone else, depend upon a shared culture for our security, our prosperity and our freedom to be. We don't require everyone to have the same faith, to lead the same kind of family life, or to participate in the same festivals. But we have a shared moral and legal inheritance, a shared language, and a shared public sphere."³

We need to protect and promote our shared values because only this can lead to social cohesion.

A way to achieve this is through what David Cameron calls "active, muscular liberalism" where a genuinely liberal country "believes in certain values and actively promotes them...It says to its citizens, this is what defines us as a society: to belong here is to believe in these things."⁴

¹ David Cameron, Speech at Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011.

² Roger Scruton, 'Multiculturalism, R.I.P.', *Spectator (US)*, Dec 2010/Jan 2011 issue.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ David Cameron, Speech at Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011.

Encouraging active participation in society; fostering pride in national identity; making sure everyone speaks English and adopts our common culture and values – these actions are vital for the continued cohesion of our society.

When discussing multiculturalism, it is also important to recognise that culture and race are not the same thing. It is this misconception that often leads to people being branded as ‘racist’ when they speak up for integration and in defence of our common culture.

By recognising the difference between race and culture, one can then observe that not all cultures can co-exist harmoniously. This is evident by the fact that there are a number of cultural practices that are prohibited in Australia because they are incompatible with our values.

This is not to say that we cannot continue to celebrate and encourage diversity. But when uncritical tolerance undermines that which unites us, we must act to change the focus back to what we share, not what divides us.

Please note that the views expressed in this submission are my personal views and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Liberal Party.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

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