

To the Joint Standing Committee on Multiculturalism,

The general terms of reference:

"... to inquire into the economic, social and cultural impacts of migration and make recommendations to maximise the positive benefits of migration."

I'd like to comment primarily on the Multiculturalism issues brought about through migration. I believe it needs scrutiny, discussion and wise policy.

"Multiculturalism" is a term, simple enough to define in words but which can be understood quite differently because of widely varying meanings to different audiences.

The definition of Multiculturalism from the Federal Department of immigration and Citizenship, found on the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia page

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/agenda/agenda89/whatismu.htm>

is as follows:

- **Multiculturalism:** *In a descriptive sense, multicultural is simply a term which describes the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Australia.*

wordnet.princeton.edu muddies it up a little by bringing doctrine, peace and equity into the picture:-

- *Multiculturalism: the doctrine that several different cultures (rather than one national culture) can coexist peacefully and equitably in a single country.*

Not sure if that really made things clearer but the general idea I get from these definitions is that multiculturalism is:

*"more than one culture living in one country".*

This doesn't sound too bad on the surface but I don't think this is what many Australians think of when they think of multiculturalism.

Let me give an example:

For me, I think of one big cooking pot with one basic, underlying culture in there.

To that have been added many other bits – other cultures each stirring some of their culture into the big pot. No one culture is overwhelming (or trying to overwhelm) the underlying culture. They all add bits but leave the main flavour as the main flavour. It's a fairly weird mix, constantly changing flavour slightly with ebbs and flows but with an obvious base ingredient that remains.

And to me this is fully acceptable. As an Australian I'd call it normal given something like 97% of Australians are originally migrants from overseas or descendents of such. There are lots of flavours in that pot but there is a distinct Aussie flavour that permeates.

To have another culture come and throw out the contents of that pot, replace it with their culture and disallow anything else to be added. What would you call that?

I think we're seeing a bit of that happening now across Europe and to me it is not good.

I hope and pray that it never happens in this country.

Greg Sheridan wrote a recent article from The Australian.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/how-i-lost-faith-in-multiculturalism/story-fn59niix-1226031793805>

I think he is accurate in his appraisal and many of the sentiments I share below are direct or very close quotes from that article by Greg.

1. Economic impacts of migration.

Migration has pluses and minuses but the big issues as I understand it are Social & Cultural.

2. Social impacts of migration.

Generally in my opinion migration has been a positive thing.

The exception as I see it is where large numbers of migrants gather in groups and alienate themselves. The tendency to form little mini nations or ghettos is undeniable. The trouble comes when they retain and/or encourage what appear to be many of the worst traits that caused them grief in their homeland in the first instance. Eg The inability to forgive and get on with each other. Croatians & the Serbians in the 80's would regularly clash at football matches bringing their racial hatred baggage across the world. Leave it at the gate I say, not necessary and not welcome. 30 years later and many of the Serbs & the Croats are still not great mates – but the incidence of this hatred is much reduced. Time has been a bit of a healer and many of the Serbians & Croatians in this country are over it.

In Australia we do not fight people just because they are a different race. You fight when people are trying to inflict on you a regime which is unfair, undemocratic, despotic. And win or lose you pick yourself and the other bloke up, dust yourselves off shake hands and get back to work.

The worst social impact as I see it is the extreme Muslim push. Our constitution may not be perfect but needs to stand firm. The laws of this country have stood us in good stead and are part of the reason it is what it is. The law should not be tampered with to appease the noisy minority. Large migrations of Muslims, as we are seeing throughout Europe now, are causing a lot of trouble that we do not want and can avoid.

3. Cultural impacts of migration.

Generally migrants to Australia take a generation or two – sometimes three to assimilate to the point where they are as “Australian” as the next. The exception appears to be Muslims. Many ethnic mini communities have sprung up over the years: “Vietnamatta”, Little Italy in Leichardt, Chinatown in Darling Harbour. These have had their ‘not so great periods’, but generally they have integrated. They have added bits of their culture to the local culture absorbing and refining as the years pass – which mostly has been a good thing. This watering down of the culture is frowned upon in Muslim

societies and there appears to be no desire to change. The push for Sharia Law is the worst example of a reluctance to embrace the local culture and enforce their own.

4. Recommendations to maximise the positive benefits of migration:-

- a) Say no to Islamic migration on a mass scale. The inflow of illegal immigrants by boat in the north, almost all Muslim, mostly unskilled, should be stopped.
- b) In the formal immigration program, there should be a rigid adherence to skills qualifications so that the people who come here are well educated, easily employable and speak English.
- c) Within the formal refugee and humanitarian allocation of 13,500 places a year, a **legitimate stress should be placed on** need but also on **the ability to integrate into Australian society**.
- d) Community groups are well placed to identify the needs these people have when they arrive and find the assistance that they need to become self sufficient and productive citizens.
- e) We should not place immigration officers in the countries with the greatest traditions of radicalism.
- f) Wherever we can we need to allay the fears (often unfounded) that the wider population has about the dangers that refugees pose.
- g) I cannot speak for all Australians but I think it would be true of most that we want to offer refugees a fair go. We want a program that rewards those that have waited patiently, aren't a threat to Australian security, and will work hard and not become a burden on society.

Sincerely,