

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration - Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

As we are sure the Committee appreciates, the subject has strong ideological and practical elements. In making our submission, we wish to state that we have been following the situation in the UK and the Middle East in particular for considerable time so our comments are not uninformed.

Introduction

We note that both the Chair and the Minister claim that the Australian situation is somehow different to that in Europe but it is not clear in what ways they mean as 'multiculturalism' seems to mean different things to different people and culture and religion somehow get mixed in a confusing way.

- Some like John Lennon with the song "*Imagine*" may say that social harmony will only be achieved when religion is abolished.
- Others would say that it is when Sharia law is the only legal system prevailing in Australia.
- A common statement is that Australia "is enriched by other cultures" which will advance our nation's social prosperity.
- Secularists may say that the our national harmony will be advanced when people are fully entitled to whatever religious beliefs they choose as long as they keep them to themselves because it should be a private or personal matter.
- The post-modernists may believe in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society where everybody gets along happily and all religions modify their beliefs so as to not offend others and then direct their energies to the benefit of mankind.

The spectrum of thinking is likely to be very wide so we wonder how Australians, collectively, will judge if multiculturalism is a success or not? Multiculturalism should not be an end in itself.

We trust the Committee has some performance monitoring in mind to evaluate whatever recommendations it makes. Behaviour follows beliefs so any performance monitoring should try to link positive and negative behaviour to specific world views, cultures, religions or ideologies. Maybe a baseline survey along these lines would be a good basis for any future review of multiculturalism. The public should have a say in any such monitoring to avoid bias like this Inquiry which seems to only seek the views of part of the population.

What is culture?

We suggest that the Committee needs to acknowledge that Australia has always been multi-cultural. The differences between the surfer culture; the football culture; the bkie culture; the outback graziers' culture; the opera, ballet and art galleries culture; Aboriginal culture; churchianity culture and so on are as great as any between the German, Croatian or Italian migrants for example. Depending on one's world view, all these cultures could be said to have obnoxious aspects as well as positive aspects.

Culture is not intrinsically 'good, natural or enduring'. Greatest national social progress has been made when individuals and groups stepped aside from uncivilized aspects of their culture; Luther, Wilberforce and General Booth are just three religious examples

who, with great difficulty and courage, won freedom for many from oppression. There are of course many significant non-religious reformers also.

If a person finds all their identity in their culture, then they are unlikely to change or “advance”. Similarly if a person cannot stand aside from their culture then they are controlled by it. Promotion of cultures may well be misguided and counterproductive to any goal of social inclusion or social harmony.

Stability of Multicultural Societies

The next point concerns the belief (or should we say hope) that a multi-cultural, multi-faith society is a stable one. Australia may be multi-cultural but we suggest it is not yet multi-faith. The great majority of the country is still aligned to Christianity or has no religious beliefs. It is certainly true that the proportion of people aligned to all other religions is growing from a small base (5%) but will that be a “good thing”? There is nowhere in the world that we can think of that can be regarded as a successful model of a stable multi-faith society except perhaps Singapore. Indeed we do not believe such a concept stands to reason.

One dictionary definition of a nation is “.. *people of mainly common descent, language, history, etc ... forming a society under one government*”. A country needs some unifying forces or it ceases to be a nation. Like a piece of furniture, nations fall apart when pressure comes and the glue fails. An identity, something to love and cherish, something to fight for are qualities – the glue – which also have to underpin the family and local communities or there is no foundation for society other than selfishness. A robust economy, full employment, childcare etc do not constitute the “glue”; it is the values, standards, and causes that bind. Pluralism, on the other hand, is a recipe for instability. We want a nation - a wonderful country is not enough. Cohesion is far more important than inclusion.

Values and standards derive from a religion or a world view and unless these values are widely shared in society, that society must crumble over time.

Fundamentalism

We are saddened at the frequency with which commentators and politicians alike unthinkingly suggest it is the so-called radical, zealous, fundamental or extreme proponents of religions that are the real threat to multiculturalism and social harmony. You, like us, will have heard it said – particularly by the non-religious - that it is the fundamentalists of all religions that cause the problems worldwide – a broad generalization usually said in a derogatory or condemnatory tone.

While it may be a convenient to blame somebody, we suggest fundamentalists are the wrong target. To call a person a fundamentalist in a derogatory tone is intellectually unsound. For example, would not any rational person belonging to any organization be it a religious group, a political party, social club or whatever, want to be assured that they are in agreement with the fundamental beliefs of that organization? It is the fundamentalist or zealots in all walks of life – the arts, sport, science, religion, engineering visionaries, and so on that bring about positive change in our society.

Australians should not condemn fundamentalism etc in any religion. We suggest it is not how someone holds beliefs, but the content of those beliefs that needs scrutiny. It is what some people believe that may represent a threat to society. Consequently we as individuals and as a nation need the absolute freedom to scrutinize, debate,

criticize, judge, have serious contempt for, express revulsion of, any uncivilized practice, custom, teaching or belief of any culture, religion or world view – but not hatred or violence towards the people. That freedom should never be curtailed. A mark of maturity of a nation should be when those debates can be held with dignity and respect without resort to legislation to muzzle debate.

We acknowledge that the subject is complex because strong emotions, zeal and conviction are usually associated with cultural and religious beliefs; feelings that outsiders find difficult to understand and so tend to be disparaging or condescending. Some religious and cultural practices certainly may appear weird to outsiders who have little or no understanding of their basis and as we all know, the media is apt to sensationalize or present distorted impressions of such actions.

Presuppositions

We expect the Committee would agree that in an analysis of any contentious subject it is worthwhile to first identify any unspoken presuppositions in the Australian debate because this is usually where paths diverge. We looked closely at the 'rights-type' multiculturalism as well as the appeasement mentality that has cost Britain so dearly. There are of course a mixture of positives and negatives but five falsehoods seemed prevalent to us - (1) religious discrimination and racism are synonymous, (2) all religions are equal and benign, (3) all cultures are equal, and (4) Islam in Australia is somehow different to Islam in other countries. An informed (and honest) person using almost any criteria can show these presuppositions are completely false yet the postmodern delusion persists. Then (5) the new commandment "thou shalt not offend" takes over but is one-sided in who is being protected from offence particularly when criticism is justified and action against uncivilized practices is required.

Islam

It is clear that the British and German Prime Ministers in saying that multiculturalism is a failure in their countries were referring to Islam and so it deserves special mention. There is a tendency by the non-religious to treat all religions as equal alternatives. Islam stands out however as being a political system as much as a religious system. It has its own legal system, finance system, education system, and so on. Throughout its history and certainly very much today, Islam has used military force to gain political control. You would no doubt be aware that probably over 80% of the conflicts in the World today are the result of Islamists trying to take control of territory by force. That political control is ultimately achieved when Sharia law is in place in a country. The imposition of Sharia law is included in the announced intentions of many Muslim leaders worldwide.

Consequently it is a great mistake to regard Islam as "just another religion". Instead Islam is a theocracy to be considered alongside competing forms of government of communism, democracy, dictatorships, etc. Supporting Islam is supporting a change from democracy to theocracy where there is no separation of church and state.

The following is an example of how the Committee needs to take care with the real meaning of certain statements. Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam the Mufti of Australia said on ABC TV in 2001 "in Australia we are concerned that we live here to show Islam, Islam is tolerant. Islam is friendly. Islam is amicable, Islam is opening the way to shake hands with everybody, live with everybody, dwell near any neighbour and build close to

anybody around us. All this Islam does not have any obstacles in our life but open doors for us to intermingle with everybody else and live with everybody else."

Such a statement would no doubt be welcomed by the Committee. However in the same interview when questioned about interpretation of the Quran, he said "Islam is the clear clean page which doesn't change. It didn't change in the past, is not changing now, it will not change in the future". The Committee may know that the Quran states that Muslims must not submit to any political or legal authority other than Sharia (Q17:100-114, Q18:25-29, Q12:35-39). The Quran also says the Muslim must not take Jews, infidels or Christians as friends (Q2:25-29, 110-114, Q5:55-59, 60-64, Q9:20-24, Q60:5-9). There are many other anti-social commands in the Quran also so how are the Mufti's conflicting statements to be reconciled? The answer is that when in minority, Islam will practice *Taqiya* (permitted deceit of infidels) and be conciliatory but when it attains majority, it reverts to hardline interpretation and implementation of the Quran because it is a legalistic religion. There are Muslim reformers who, we expect, the Committee hopes will succeed but that may be a vain hope.

Another example is the use of the word "peace". Many non-Muslims have been heartened by Islamic leaders saying they are strongly for peace and that Islam is a peaceful religion. Peace however is the name for the sphere (Dar al-Islam) on earth where Islam rules and "battle" is the name of the sphere where Islam is in a minority so of course they want peace. This aspect was mentioned in the trial of the five Sydney men accused of plotting a terrorist attack but shown more forcibly in the London Muslim peace march where the placards read "Freedom – go to hell", "exterminate those who slander Islam", "massacre those who insult Islam", "Islam will dominate the World", "Europe – take some lessons from 9/11", "behead those who insult Islam" and so on.

We think, we read, we listen, we discuss and have had Muslims to our home and we have all been glad to relate – it is the Islamic system that is threat to stability and social harmony.

Conclusions

Inclusiveness and multiculturalism are great ideals but should be only for those who qualify with standards of character and demonstrated commitment to cohesion and Australian institutions. Minorities and groups should seek to be compatible with Australian society – not the other way around. There are higher ideals than inclusiveness. Freedoms should not be sacrificed for inclusiveness as some of our freedoms were won with the blood of our soldiers.

For example we note a strong lack of desire of some Muslims to assimilate and then, as mentioned, there is the teaching in the Quran that forbids friendship with Jews and Christians. The European experience seems to indicate that the Muslims prefer to create a state within a state as they progressively introduce their own legal, educational, financial systems and even territorial enclaves. The conclusion seems clear that the committed Islamists have little intention of living in harmony with us infidels in the long term. In this regard, it is foolish to expect to expect Islam in Australia will be any different – it is just a matter of time and the numbers before we find ourselves in the European position.

There will be other cultural or religious groups that pose various threats to Australian society and our plea is that the Committee does not indiscriminately support all

minority groups just because they are a minority. Our immigration policies need to be more discerning against belief systems that are committed to the incremental overturning of Australian freedoms and political systems.