

**Australian Parliament
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Submission no. 390**

To the Joint Standing Committee on Migration,
SUBJECT: Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

I was very glad to learn of the government's renewed interest in multicultural policy, and commend its efforts in building and improving it. I have read the submissions of Liberty Victoria and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, and agree with their comments. I note also the recent initiative of the ECCV, in partnership with the Victorian government, to have an annual lecture series (the Walter Lippmann Memorial Lectures, in which I have been indirectly involved) to celebrate and discuss multicultural policy in Australia.

In my view, our proud history of multiculturalism is and should be regarded as a national asset. Culturally diverse societies are able to adapt more successfully to rapid global changes. In addition, Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds have contributed to Australia's entrepreneurial skills, bolstering our country's ability to trade and interact with other nations. This tradition has extended from the days of trade and exchange between Macassan (Indonesian) fishers and northern indigenous Australians at least 400 years ago to contemporary times. Migrants have contributed to Australia's economy and significantly broadened business opportunities. The line of business builders from Belarusian-born Sidney Myer to Czech-born Frank Lowy attests to this. This will continue and should enjoy the support of governments at all levels. In my opinion, Australia's community of globally literate people are its greatest asset and its multiculturalism is a brand to sell on the global market.

In regards to overarching philosophies, I stand by my view that 'metaphors of the past will not suffice for a changing future [in Australian multiculturalism]. Australia should move away from aiming to be a melting pot or a mosaic. It should be... a chameleon nation. A chameleon nation adapts to fit in with its context.' It should be constant in its constitution and adaptable in its projection, drawing out different cultural attributes in different settings but moving in one direction and as a whole. A chameleon nation would draw more effectively (as outlined by the ECCV on p 4) 'on the full spectrum of its diversity to respond holistically and intelligently to global change. The chameleon nation... builds all the

differences it contains to ensure that Australia is a nation of the world and continues to contain the world within our nation' (with Samah Hadid, see www.theage.com.au/opinion/one-nation-many-cultures-20090317-911y.html).

The Committee has called for 'innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society'. I have had the privilege of working with the Sudanese community for the past decade through the Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program (www.sailprogram.org.au). This Program provides free English support and community services to approximately 500 Sudanese people each week from nine campuses across Australia. Its success lies in the Program's ability to build the networks of recently arrived refugees. These networks, created from a team of exclusively volunteer staff, 'support... participation' by introducing new arrivals to people from the settled community. These people act as their advocates and supports especially for work and education. Like many similar programs, the SAIL Program is also a place of exchange in which non-Sudanese participants learn as much as do Sudanese participants. This interaction is as important in easing settlement strains as programs only targeting the new arrival communities, in my experience.

Finally, it is disappointing that the Committee's terms of reference mention only the 'contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region'. Australia's fastest growing ethnic community in the past decade has been the Sudanese community. This community will become citizens of the world's newest nation in the south of Sudan on 9 July 2011. The ties between this diaspora community and south Sudan mean that Australia has an important role to play in the birth of the new nation. Australia can and should make use of the diaspora's links to promote social, economic and cultural exchange. This relationship could also form the basis of an increased contribution of the Australian government to human rights promotion on the African continent. Indeed, the same could be said of the many, new and emerging African diaspora communities in Australia, which provide similar opportunities for Australia's international relations.

I congratulate the government on its reassessment of Australian multicultural policy and hope that your work will build on the high points of the policy from the past. Best wishes,