

Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the national conversation regarding multiculturalism.

Multicultural organisations perform an important role when they support new arrivals in transition through the process of integration. However I'm concerned and saddened when multiculturalism is used by some people to isolate themselves from their fellow Australians. Some even seek to change the culture by political, social and legal pressure. Then multiculturalism becomes destructive rather than building a well-functioning healthy Australia.

I agree that this is an important time in Australia's history. The contemporary meaning of multiculturalism needs to be clearly defined and honestly discussed.

Multiculturalism was once believed to be a process through which people from many countries are welcomed because they want ultimately to be Australian. Unfortunately this meaning seems to be subtly changing. Is there still a reasonable expectation that all citizens can love Australia with her 'positives' and 'negatives' and work for our common benefit?

Multiculturalism can benefit Australia as long as its intention is to enrich and build a strong and healthy country for the good of all Australians. When it produces confusion, litigation and insularity it will lead to our serious detriment.

From my own perspective I strongly believe that Australia has a unique character and identity which has developed over much time. It's served our country well and attracted many people to our shores.

Like all human endeavours it has its failings. But our laws, our political systems, language, history and heritage should be preserved and honoured.

It's important also remember that from the outset the founders of our nation dedicated Australia to 'Almighty God'. Christian values are at the foundation of our shared moral code, even reflected in the time-honoured practice of road courtesy. 'Treat others as you want them to treat you' is a Christian adage, drawn from the words of Jesus. Likewise it's commonly assumed that we and our neighbours will adhere to the Ten Commandments by speaking honestly, not stealing others' property or causing each other deliberate harm. It's acknowledged also that much of the self-sacrificing work

in the volunteer, caring and welfare sectors is performed by people who are motivated by a Christian ethos and/or faith. Therefore the Christian aspect of Australia's identity should be honoured and given full respect for its contribution. The idea that open proclamation of Christian faith and traditions like Easter and Christmas could be an offence to multiculturalism needs to be carefully and wisely examined and discussed. For I believe that many people have come to Australia because they know it is a country where Christian values are still a part of everyday culture.

To summarise: I believe that all residents and citizens of Australia should contribute to the common good of all Australia by observing its laws, speaking the common language of English, honouring our unique nature, traditions and Christian foundations. They should seek to integrate into Australia's broad society and identity. As long as multiculturalism serves this purpose Australians can all benefit.

Respectfully yours