

11/5/2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

Below is our submission to the Strengthening Multiculturalism inquiry.

Multiculturalism, like travel, broadens the mind and enhances one's senses and appreciation of diversity without the cost of flying abroad. It also helps eliminate the fear of what is different or unusual to us. This way we can see that multiculturalism is democracy of lifestyles that promotes rather than hinders social cohesion.

Australian multiculturalism which is different from what has been unsuccessfully practiced in some major European countries. It encourages and promotes mutual respect, exposes people to each other's food, culture, language, religion, political views etc and by doing so creates a more tolerant open minded interesting and harmonious society.

Multiculturalism also connects Australia and Australians in a personal way to people's countries of origin which can be very valuable in promoting and facilitating business, trade, political negotiations, educational exchanges and the like.

What is not so good about Australian multiculturalism is the media's excessive focus on negative utterances by a handful of ignorant people. Instead of shaming them for their woeful ignorance, the media often present their views as facts. If intolerant or ignorant views are repeatedly expressed about a particular community, especially by politicians or in the media, it can make that community feel marginalised and alienated, and may even cause discrimination in an individual getting or keeping a job, which can further marginalise the individual and community.

If a community congregates in one suburb, and are barred by not speaking English from talking to people outside the community, it can result in self-imposed isolation from the broader community which is probably what has happened in a number of major European countries.

The following measures appear highly desirable:

- More financial, ie, tax, cash incentives for learning English
- Free ESL lessons for anyone who speaks less than an 'intermediate' standard of English with progress tied to financial rewards.
- School and community programs that encourage individuals from different communities to attend different cultural events or places of worship etc and/or share food, culture, thoughts on issues etc..
- Pro-active job program for people who are unemployed.
- Mentoring scheme whereby new arrivals are assigned a mentor who they can choose from whether the mentor comes from within or outside their ethnic/linguistic group.

Australian multiculturalism has been successful. Most of us are aware of some or all of the following

positive outcomes:

A refugee who could not speak English when arriving in Australia and within ten years attaining a PhD and going on to work in welfare and counter terrorism.

Second generation attaining university degree/s and after experience working in Australia travelling to country of origin to head companies, universities etc., some returning to Australia to build on their business.

Doctors and lawyers from the same ethnic community working within their community, able to understand and speak the language of the community.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend the following:

1. A federal Bill of Rights
2. Strengthening rather than watering down of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and expanding its scope.
3. Constitutional recognition of Australia's multicultural diversity
4. Expression of respect for and commitment to multiculturalism in the citizenship oath.

Yours faithfully,

Eziz Bawermend BSc MBA
Vice President
Kurdish Lobby Australia