

8th April 2011

The Secretary
Joint Committee
Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

Dear Sir and Members of the Committee,

SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

1. I hereby submit this brief submission to the committee. It is brief because I have only just returned from three weeks in the Middle East.
2. I am a Chartered Professional Engineer who has spent most of his working life working around the world in a large number of countries. I therefore have first hand experience of a great many peoples, cultures and mores.
3. I speak several languages to a colloquial level but German and Mandarin to an intermediate level, therefore I generally can sense the situation(s) existing in countries through which I travel and work.

SUBMISSION

Multiculturalism

4. In my opinion the term Multiculturalism is poorly understood by the average Australian and the immigrants that settle here. From discussions with a large number of immigrant workers in the engineering, mining and construction industries the word causes our immigrants to believe that they can just continue their culture and mores in Australia as if they still lived in their homeland.
5. Generally, immigrants to Australia, but probably excluding the majority of our national pro-rata share of genuine refugees, should be selected on what they can contribute to the nation by way of a compendium of skills, education, compatible culture and a willingness to be **absorbed** into our culture and way of life.
6. Prospective immigrants that cannot commit to becoming Australian first no matter what their nation of origin should not qualify for immigration. We cannot afford nor should we want to suffer the cultural disturbances and disruptions to our way of life as suffered by the French, British, and Spanish indeed most European Union Countries that have allowed free cross border access to immigrants and illegal refugees.

7. Multiculturalism should not be the word used to describe the current situation in most of our state cities where we allow Ghettos of dispirit national and religious groups to take root such that our culture is smothered by non-English speaking, religiously intolerant, law disregarding mono-ethnic groupings. These people do not embrace Multiculturalism as we know it.

Settlement and Participation

8. A critical pre-requisite to immigration should be for immigrants to commit to: learning our primary language – English; accepting and abiding by our laws, codes of practice, cultural mores; and gaining Australian nationality as their highest priority.
9. I acknowledge that participation in a new community can be difficult. Perhaps new immigrants would be better integrated if they were allocated volunteer Mentors for specific purposes such as: settling in, finding a job, learning English, participating in sports and other activities. We are a nation of volunteers and it would not be too difficult to commence a nationwide mentoring programme for immigrants. I personally benefitted from mentoring when living in Thailand, UK and Germany.
10. Australia has a wide variety of active service clubs that could be approached to devise and contribute to mentor programmes to assist migrants. Rotary International and Lions are good examples.
11. Currently, there are too many suburbs in our capital and other cities that have enclaves or ghettos of immigrants who are not integrated in any way into our society. Perhaps this is caused in part by the absence of affordable community and private sector housing. This could be remedied by government building more scattered public housing integrated into suburbia – single houses, not clusters that encourage enclaves of immigrants.
12. Immigrants should be given a period of time in which to become firstly a permanent resident and then an Australian citizen. Permanent residency should not automatically qualify people for receipt of the full range of Centrelink etc benefits. Achieving Australian citizenship should be the aim or primary objective of all immigrants.
13. Immigrants (excluding those that have achieved Australian nationality) that flout our laws should be given a warning to comply with our legislation. If an immigrant continues to disobey laws, bylaws whatever then they should show cause why they should remain in Australia. Perhaps a “three strike rule” should apply. Criminal offences should be a trigger for deportation back to country of origin.
14. Perhaps a scheme could be devised where immigrants can fast track to gaining Australian citizenship. This could involve working for say three to five years in remote areas on resources sector or infrastructure development projects. The scheme could be cumulative to account for movement between regions and more settled areas.
15. Whether the Federal Government acknowledges it or not, we do have a problem with some nationalist Muslim and other groups. I know this from time as a licensed investigator and from working with police forces and others. The Muslim religion in Australia is in some places highly influenced by extremists and their followers (some have been deported).

16. In Turkey, the Muslim religion is overseen by the government. The religious schools have standards. Mullahs and others are trained to a standard and their salaries and mosques are at least in part funded by the government. In our secular society this could not occur but anyone preaching sedition, terrorism or counter culture propaganda should face court and if found guilty of a criminal offence deported immediately. If at present our legal framework does not allow this then it should be changed to allow it.
17. There appears to be a problem with timely recognition of professional and trade qualifications. Whether the system is too slow or we are enforcing a form of protectionism of our professional and trade establishments I am not sure but I have worked with many foreign engineers who on questioning had better qualifications than I had but who for one reason or other were unable to have their qualifications recognised. I have personal experience of this. One of my overseas (UK) qualifications is superior to the equivalent Australian qualification but remains unrecognised.

National Productive capacity

18. Migration has definitely contributed to enhancing our national short, medium and long term productive capacity but it still remains ineffective.
19. There are large numbers of immigrant professionals and trades persons either unemployed or misemployed. A representative survey of taxi drivers in any capital city would prove this point. A large number of qualified immigrants probably will never find employment in their chosen qualification because they do not have adequate English, can't get recognition of skills or cannot take the time off work to convert to new skills areas. This is one area that must be addressed as it rankles with the immigrant population and could affect our recruitment of immigrant personnel from some countries.
20. In determining the effectiveness of settling immigrant workers, the committee should not fall into the trap of asking only corporate CEO, highfliers, academics and the like as they are likely to be personally insulated from migrant's problems and thus out of touch with reality. The committee should actively canvass the opinions of middle and lower levels of management in our various employment sectors. This means **going out to talk with them, not just placing a Public Notice of Inquiry!!!!**
21. Some initiatives to consider that may assist migrant communities:
 - a. Develop a national coaching and mentoring programme,
 - b. Make recognition of prior learning and overseas qualification more streamlined,
 - c. Provide a variety of programmes for migrants to undertake conversion or bridging courses for skills.
 - d. Approach our service club communities to see what they can offer.
 - e. Develop better cultural exchange opportunities at regional level to foster better understanding e.g. participation in fairs, carnivals, regional cultural activities such as festivals.
 - f. Provide funding for development of business plans assisted by mentors for proposed business initiatives.
 - g. Provide better language training – including volunteer English teaches possibly through Volunteers Australia and such organisations.

- h. Streamline eligibility to serve – allow qualified membership of the Armed Forces and police forces.
- i. Create a “Construction Corps” for deployment to regions to work on infrastructure projects. This could include small groups of technical personnel deployed to work with Contractors on a training scheme partially funded by the Commonwealth. I could provide more on this given the time.
- j. Create a skills database even for personnel not fully accredited or whose qualifications are not recognised. The data base could be used to select adult trainees, apprentices or professionals for bridging training to qualification.

CONCLUSION

- 22. This submission was done in a rush as I was only advised of it today and felt I should contribute.

Yours Sincerely