

16 March 2011

Australia is a nation of immigrants and it is widely accepted that we are one of the most successful and culturally diverse countries in the world.

This diversity has allowed us to become rich in experiences, enjoying many important, often unacknowledged, benefits, and links with other nations.

However our long history of multiculturalism and its benefits should never be taken for granted. We continually need to explore creatively and generously programs encouraging inclusiveness, participation and integration, to build on the benefits we have today.

These programs need essentially to be community based, locally based, owned and organised by local communities who are best situated to know the needs, hopes, aspirations and challenges of both those from culturally diverse backgrounds and long term citizens in their local area.

It is at the local, community level where we need to continue to foster tolerance, acceptance, and cultural diversity as a unifying force in the community and wider society.

Local groups, when supported by government at all levels, find welcoming and working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds rewarding, productive and enriching.

We need to continually strengthen local programs which foster social inclusion, building on the rich foundations which have made Australia such a vibrant, colourful and successful nation.

H J