

Submission from:

I would like to begin by pointing out that the description of the purpose of this inquiry does not mention the term

'multiculturalism' but the heading does. Also nowhere is there mention, that I could find, of a definition of what the heading, but not the terms of reference even means. No-one ever denies that migrants make, and have made a contribution to Australia right from European settlement. So what is the point about 'multiculturalism' in this inquiry seeing as there seems to be no elaboration on the meaning? So my first point is that the terms of reference are not clear and are very ambiguous.

My second point is that the period for submission is ridiculously short and denies many people the opportunity to put in submissions. This is very disappointing and makes me wonder why there is so little time allowed.

My parents-in-law were Dutch migrants and my husband was born in The Netherlands. So we have migrants in our family. Migrants can bring many benefits to Australia in terms of skills, workers, and cultural variation. But we strongly object to any idea that migrant should not seek to embrace the Australian culture when they come to live here. Of course this does not mean that they cannot practice certain practices, beliefs and social forms that they practised in their country of birth, and they will of course, but it does mean that they should not be encouraged to think of themselves as separate from the Australian culture that they have chosen to be part of.

Government funding should be available for lessons in English and Australian attitudes, beliefs and social forms, but not to support particular ethnic groups to continue to act and live lives separate from the mainstream Australia.

Australia has a culture which is based on the Anglo Christian formation of our country. Our practices include Christian celebrations and the Westminster system of government and law. Migrants should be taught what this means in terms of respect for democratic traditions, treatment of all people, including women, codes of behaviour, social forms such as our egalitarianism and informal lifestyle. They should also be taught about Australian customary beliefs such as Christmas, Easter and Anzac Day, plus our flag and National Anthem, and of course our freedom of association and speech.

If the government persists in encouraging migrants to feel that they can live their lives in separate communities, which is what the outcome of aggressive support for ethnic groups without any requirement for them to embrace the national culture has brought about in some other countries, including The Netherlands, the result will be more aggressive nationalism by people of the existing culture. I have some knowledge of The Netherlands and that is exactly what is happening there. It has nothing to do with eating croquettes, for example, but how well migrants seek to assimilate into their new society, or rather choose to live in ethnic groups where the country's nationals are kept out or feel unwelcome.

You may not realise if you live in Canberra but stronger Australian nationalism is definitely happening in Australia as well. You cannot control the way people think simply by pouring money into a policy called 'multiculturalism', whatever that means. It is up to the new residents, who came here by choice, to embrace the Australian culture and to become part of the Australian community.

When the Dutch migrants started up a Dutch club in the Wollongong area, they called it The Dutch Australian Club and that epitomises a healthy attitude to the society that they travelled half way around the world to be part of. Quite a few Australian born people have been members of that club. This reflects the kind of attitude that migrants should have as they make their contribution to the Australian society.

Yours sincerely