

Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia:

Submission by the Maltese Community Council of Victoria (MCCV)

This report from the Maltese Community Council of Victoria will concentrate on those aspects of the Inquiry which affect the Maltese Community in Victoria.

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda;

We strongly believe in the role of multiculturalism for providing a solid background for the development of a just society in Australia. As Council, we have always provided leaders to spearhead these issues within the community, as shown by the fact that no less than three persons of Maltese-background have been Chairpersons of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. In addition we have provided members of several ethnic organisations, including the previous Ethnic Affairs commission of Victoria and other organisations.

We believe that the Federal Governments should come out strongly against current ideas developing in Europe that doubt or belittle the value of multiculturalism.

We believe, however, that multiculturalism should be clearly defined, not only to emphasize its value to a multi-ethnic society, but also to delineate clearly the limits of multiculturalism. It should be made clear that multiculturalism does not include fundamental changes in the structure of our laws or the acceptances of practices which we consider to be debasing of the value of human life, as well as practices which go against the equality of women in society.

2. The contribution of Diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK & Middle East.

Maltese have formed a significant component within the Australian community since the turn of the 20th century. They have provided a solid link with Europe in various ways. The presence of Malta in the middle of the Mediterranean should help Australia as a trans-boarding facility for distribution of Australian products to Europe and the Mediterranean. Exchanges between heads of state and other high-profile political personalities between the two countries help to enhance relationships between the two countries.

3. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity

We believe that the Maltese community in Australia has contributed more than its fair share to building Australia's long-term productive capacity. Ever since the first Maltese migrants came to Australia, to work on the cane field in Queensland or in the mines in Tasmania, Victoria, etc, to the less obvious but equally relevant contributions of second and subsequent generations, their contribution has been very significant. These histories have been summarised in *Maltese Achievers in Australia* by Maurice N. Cauchi, [published by the Maltese Community Council of Victoria, 2006]

4. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises.

The following are some comments that could help to encourage establishment of business enterprises among Maltese background persons:

- * Provide mentoring services for new business owners,
- * Provide business planning services,
- * 'Business in Australia' workshops such as financial management, tax obligations, employment responsibilities,
- * Legal aid type services for areas such as company structure, leases, etc.,
- * Grants in the form of low interest/no interest loans.