



Australian Parliament
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Submission no. 440
City of Canterbury
City of Cultural Diversity

M-62-1 PT 8

Our Reference:

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The Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Subject: Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

It gives me pleasure to submit our response to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. I submit this response on behalf of the Multicultural Advisory Committee of Canterbury City Council. This committee is a successful consultative mechanism to Council and a platform for strategic community partnerships with strong social inclusion outcomes.

Our City is one of the most culturally diverse communities in Australia with over 43% of its residents being born in non-English speaking countries and speaking over 150 community languages (Source: 2006 Census). For these reasons the Multicultural Advisory Committee plays an important role in assisting us to remove barriers experienced by residents from diverse cultural backgrounds to enable them to access local services and improve their quality of life. The Committee also fosters understanding of cultural diversity through its community harmony projects and partnerships between Council and diverse communities. The policy of Multiculturalism supported by the Australian Government has been essential to the success of these strategies and to harmonious community relations in our city.

We therefore ask the Australian Government to protect the benefits of multiculturalism for future generations and to continue its long term commitment to the policy of Multiculturalism in Australia.

For any further information, please contact Mr Andy Sammut, Acting Director Corporate Services on 9789 9508.

Yours sincerely

Lara Kirchner
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER

9 May 2011



City of Canterbury

City of Cultural Diversity

Parliament of Australia
Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

Submission by Multicultural Advisory Committee

City of Canterbury

April 2011

Rationale for Response

We welcome an opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee of Migration on the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia. The Multicultural Advisory Committee of Canterbury City Council has been a highly effective community consultation mechanism since its formation in 2002. It comprises representatives of 17 community organisations, ethno-specific or multicultural, some of which have a regional or Sydney wide focus, and nominated Councillors. The Committee meets on a bi-monthly basis to examine issues relevant to local migrants and refugees and to develop strategic community partnerships with strong social inclusion outcomes for the area's residents of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. It also fosters understanding of cultural diversity through its community harmony projects and partnerships between Council and diverse communities.

For a full list of members of the MAC Committee and its achievements please refer to Attachment 1.

The organisations which form a part of the Committee are all very familiar with the needs and issues relevant to our CALD communities and together with our Council have experienced the many benefits of multiculturalism over the years. However, there have been periods in Australian modern history when our commitment to this effective social policy was undermined by various social and political forces and we had to defend it with all the strength and determination we could gather.

Therefore, we congratulate the current Government for re-affirming Australia's commitment to multiculturalism which has meant that recent generations of migrants and refugees could enjoy more freedom of personal expression, better access to services and resources, more active participation in a political, social and economic life of our country and a greater sense of belonging in Australia. It has also meant that our broader community has benefitted from the teachings and experiences of our many and varied cultures.

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

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

We believe that multiculturalism and cultural diversity enriches Australian society and strengthens our resilience as a nation of many and diverse people. It also places Australia at the forefront in the pursuit of a just and civil society. As a social policy, multiculturalism comes with a set of key principles and a policy framework which guides the way we act and manage diversity so that everyone gets a fair go, his or her contributions to community life are acknowledged and resources are distributed equitably across diverse groups – recognising that sometimes equal treatment is not fair treatment. Multiculturalism also places responsibility on government bodies and institutions to put in place mechanisms and strategies which promote social inclusion, participation and social cohesion.

Multiculturalism must be prioritised in the Government's Social Inclusion Agenda so the principles which underline it are not be compromised as a result of an overarching focus on 'mainstream' social inclusion. The new approach to social inclusion seeks to encourage a broader social change in attitudes between people of different backgrounds. We applaud this goal as a natural progression on previous access and equity policies which have traditionally placed emphasis on access to services and programs rather than effective inter-cultural community engagement.

Further, there needs to be an on-going recognition of the need to adequately resource and support the most disadvantaged ethnic communities and ensure that service delivery to ethnic communities remains responsive, equitable and fair. The overarching principles of social inclusion should therefore acknowledge multiculturalism as an issue in its own right, with its own challenges and benefits to our society.

As an example, there needs to be stronger support from the State and Federal Government for community hub initiatives for small and emerging communities that foster community capacity building, social cohesion and sustainability of small community organisations locally. Local Government alone cannot provide the physical infrastructure for such initiatives, nor should it be expected to provide the 'soft' infrastructure such as community workers to support the development of these initiatives. Funding is required from other levels of government to encourage community incubators, CALD social enterprise ventures and other social inclusion activities targeting CALD communities.

In 2010 the Multicultural Advisory Committee conducted a survey to identify social inclusion activities being undertaken or proposed by community organisations in the Canterbury LGA in order to promote the Social Inclusion Agenda of the Australian Government. This survey demonstrated that our local community embraces multiculturalism as an asset and includes the principles of

multiculturalism in ALL social inclusion initiatives. Survey respondents defined social inclusion initiatives as those which foster belonging and equal opportunities for all members of the community to participate and play a role in the social, economic or cultural life of our City regardless of their cultural background, language or beliefs. Working with and providing services to all cultures in order to break stigma which prevents social inclusion was also strongly emphasised through the survey. Local organisations currently operate a wide range of activities which they consider to be aimed at social inclusion such as: multicultural playgroups, multicultural youth programs, drumming and dance groups for teenagers from the African backgrounds, English conversation classes, Home League group for women from diverse cultures, single mums camps, kid's camps, worship and bible study meetings for people from more than 40 nations and parenting programs, teaching young people their own language and culture, soccer activities for African young people, multicultural senior support groups, Harmony Day activities, cultural displays, culture specific information seminars, outings for isolated people in the community e.g. seniors, young mums, and many more activities. All of these programs have been made possible due to the 'multicultural' agenda in New South Wales as well as on a national level. We must also recognise the strong local commitment from non-government agencies, community groups and individuals who have committed to providing programs and services which are inclusive of all members of the community as well as provision of targeted multicultural or ethno-specific interventions if required.

The Multicultural Advisory Committee feels that the Federal Government has demonstrated strong leadership when it launched the policy document "*The People of Australia- Australia's Multicultural Policy*", re-affirming our nation's Multicultural Policy and its principles. We would like to see this leadership continue into the future and for Government to send a clear and strong message to those not yet convinced of the value of our diversity that decisions about social policies in our country are made on a rational and evidence-based process as opposed to sentiments of various interest groups. Meeting the challenges of a highly diverse, multi-lingual and multi-faith population is not an easy task for governments and in this regard, the Australian government has become a model for the modern world. The challenge for the Government will be to continue this leadership in a world that appears to be increasingly uncertain and in which it may be politically valuable to foster a sense of safety in the known rather than celebrating the 'foreign'.

We also commend the Government on the introduction of *Multicultural Arts and Festival Grants* and the *Multicultural Youth Sports Program* as part of the Multicultural Policy which will provide direct benefits to diverse communities with a focus on inter-cultural engagement and harmony.

Moreover, we support the recommendation of Metro Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), a member agency of MAC, for Mayors, State and Federal MPs to be issued with resource kits outlining "The Multicultural Facts" about

multiculturalism, immigration statistics and International Law which Australia subscribes to in order to be well informed and to educate their constituencies about these issues. This will assist in maintaining a rational and evidence based approach to public discourse and the development of social and government policy in this area.

Further, we endorse the suggestion from the Metro MRC for influential people to be engaged by the Government as part of the campaign to address some assumptions, fears and myths that circulate in the community around asylum seekers, migration in general and the population increase debate. In particular, a social media campaign may be an effective and inexpensive tool in this regard that can reach younger generations of Australians with relative ease and that can challenge myths and assumptions and encourage informed debate, engagement and cohesion.

We also support the need for the Community Relations Commission (CRC) for a multicultural NSW to be better resourced to monitor implementation of social inclusion by state government agencies as part of their own programs and services and as an extension of access and equity reporting. This agency cannot act as a focal point of government responses to emerging issues which evolve from within CALD communities or impact on them without adequate resources. It also requires adequate resourcing in order to maintain current data and be able to be reflective of and responsive to the needs of a multicultural NSW. We also support adequate resourcing to strengthen the partnership between the CRC and local government and to provide increased opportunities for collaborative projects.

The Multicultural Advisory Committee also recommends that the title of Minister for Immigration and Citizenship be renamed to include Multicultural Affairs to reflect the Government's renewed commitment to Multiculturalism and its fundamental values and principles.

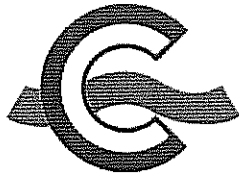
We also welcome the introduction of a new national advisory body as a worthy initiative and hope that regional organisations such as Migrant Resource Centres will be offered an opportunity to sit on this new structure and help monitor the implementation of the whole of government approach to the *Strengthening Access and Equity* component of Australia's Multicultural Policy.

The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

In Canterbury City, there is a strong evidence of the apparent bond between diaspora communities and international markets, especially of the Middle East and Asia Pacific Region. In fact most of local small to medium businesses are owned or operated by ethnic people and sale produce comes from many countries in these regions of the world. Direct trading relationships with international partners have transformed our neighbourhoods into cosmopolitan

hubs with a wide range of shopping or service outlets which cater for specialised tastes and needs of people from diverse cultures. The challenge is how to make these trading links more formalised and how to use the entrepreneurial spirit within many local diaspora communities to its full potential as in some cases local production initiated by migrants has resulted in exports to global markets.

Also, a significant number of migrants arrive in Australia under skilled migration program or possess significant qualifications that they have gained overseas. Over the time, these migrants have contributed immensely to our cultural life, our science, our technology and our social development. Many current Australian artists, sports people, media personalities etc come from non English speaking backgrounds and have made our culture richer and much more resilient in the long term. In order to facilitate their further contributions, the Australian Government should provide incentives to business to place greater value on the diversity of the workforce and encourage use of overseas contacts created by diaspora communities.



City of Canterbury

City of Cultural Diversity

Attachment 1

Canterbury Multicultural Advisory Committee

Background

The Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC) was established in 2002 and has served as a model for other Councils in how to develop structure and sustain a very representative advisory committee. MAC aims to enhance the quality of life for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people in the City of Canterbury by:

- Enabling equality of access to our services and those in our community for all residents;
- Ensuring community participation for residents of diverse cultures;
- Providing innovative responses to the needs of our community;
- Promoting community harmony and Social Inclusion Agenda locally.

The Committee meets bimonthly and comprises 17 representatives of ethno-specific services, multicultural agencies and regional organisations and Councillors. Council officers attend meetings but are not part of the Committee.

Current Members

Tripoli & Mena Assoc.
Metro Migrant Resource Centre
Chinese Australian Services Society
Lebanese Muslim Assoc.
Canterbury Bankstown Sierra Leone Women's Network
Philippine Community Council of NSW
Riverwood Community Centre
Greek Orthodox Community of NSW
United Muslim Women's Assoc.
Sudanese Australian Assoc.
Somali Development & Integration Centre
Inner South West Community Development Organisation
Korean Society of Sydney
Canterbury Harmony Group Inc.
Bangladeshi Community Council
Lakemba Bangla School
Hindu Council of Australia
Australian Islamic Mission

Achievements

MAC has played a significant role in providing feedback into Council planning processes and service reviews as well as initiating numerous and successful community relations projects. Some of the highlights are listed below.

- Feedback into Council planning processes and service reviews:
 - Multicultural Policy and Action Plan annually;
 - Waste Education Multi-lingual Campaigns;
 - Open Space Study;
 - Community Facilities Study;
 - Town Centre Development Project;
 - Social Planning Consultations;
 - Multicultural Library Services.
- Community relations projects:
 - Harmony Day celebrations;
 - Canterbury's People book & website (multicultural oral history project) with matching funding from Migration Heritage Centre of NSW;
 - Canterbury Inter-faith Harmony Project funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship;
 - Multicultural Mosaics Projects (5 street mosaics);
 - Peace Forums;
 - Canterbury Bankstown Community Harmony Initiatives Project;
 - Women's Only swimming programs advocated by the Committee;
 - Garden of the World Project at Gough Whitlam Park, Undercliffe
 - Refugee Youth Photostory Project
 - Multicultural Programs brochure in 8 major community languages
- Written representations made to Federal and State Ministers on many issues of importance to migrant and refugee communities over the years.
- Annual strategic planning forums held by the Committee to review current activities and goals by examining needs of local community and developing strategies to address identified needs and issues.
- Social Inclusion Agenda:
 - In 2010 the Committee brought together key stakeholders around a Video Shed funding proposal which targeted the economic disadvantage of local youth.

- Also in 2010, the Committee conducted the Social Inclusion Activities Survey to identify other social inclusion activities being undertaken or proposed by community organisations in the Canterbury LGA in order to promote the Social Inclusion Agenda of the Australian Government and to facilitate strategic partnerships addressing special disadvantage in our local community.
- The Committee played a major role in advocating for a new Emerging Community Resource Centre to be established by Council at a Council owned community facility at Lakemba to assist with building capacity in small and emerging communities to deliver programs to their disadvantaged communities.
The proposed Emerging Communities Resource Centre will provide a central place for small and emerging communities to share office space, knowledge, experience and skills to build their capacity to run social inclusion projects. It is also hoped that through this space these communities will become more visible to the community at large, to other settlement community service providers and to funding bodies.

Future Directions

The Committee will continue to support local social inclusion projects which make the policy of Multiculturalism inclusive and unifying, and which support our community cohesion at the local level. Future projects will emphasise the things that unite us as people- our desire for social harmony and our common membership of the Australian community.