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Australia India Society of Victoria Inc

Immigration Inquiry Submission

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

Australia is a country of migrants (excluding the Australian Indigenous communities). Over 120 countries are represented in all aspects of social networks, employment, of community structures.

The previous emphasis on Assimilation was a one way process where the migrants were required to give up their cultural identity and subsume the dominant cultural identity which was White Anglo-Saxon. Sometimes the immigrants were referred to as 'Aliens' or New Australians' in the past.

The concept of Multiculturalism is welcomed in which all are included and where no one is left out. Multiculturalism means diversity. Diversity discourages one group's cultural values to become the acceptable dominant force and reduce tolerance for outsiders. Predominance of one group impairs others ability to contribute and add to the society.

The Australia India Society of Victoria is guided by this definition of *Multiculturalism* (Rosado C http://rosado.net/pdf/Def_of_Multiculturalism.pdf, viewed 20 /5/2011) .*Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.*

SETTLEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

We at Australia India Society of Victoria encourage multi-ethnic dialogues, multi-ethnic co-operation . Our membership is open to all Australians, irrespective of their origins, ethnicity , ethnic groups such as the Anglo-Saxons, Europeans . This encourages social cohesion and respect for each other

Immigration is a stressful process. Acculturation is seen in public health research as a health risk factor for immigrant populations. Migration has been linked to discrimination, poverty, and loss of social networks, beliefs, values, or norms which lead to **poorer health and barriers to care** (Ref -. Abraido-Lanza AF, Armbrister AN, et al. Toward

a theory-driven model of acculturation in public health research. *Am J Public Health*. 2006;96(8):1342–1346. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2005.064980.

First-generation immigrants are more likely to develop emotional disorders and four times more likely to develop a schizophrenic disorder than second-generation immigrants. (Ref: 'Social defeat' linked to psychotic disorder development. *Psychol Med* 2005; 35: 1155–1163)

It is very important to assist new migrants for at least the first generation. A recent increase in INDIAN Population demands attention to some barriers to using health services and preventive services in particular Domestic Violence.

Indian culture is a 5000 years old culture. Indians are proud of their traditions and hold on to their traditions, values and cultural identity. Sometimes it is difficult for the Indian migrants to connect with the values of the broader community.

Among many positive strengths are a love of education, hard work, need for success, ability to speak English, low criminality rates, dedication for family, respect for elders.

On the reverse side of the coin are many negatives.

One main negative is the status of women. Gender inequality is an issue.

There are marked cultural differences in the way Domestic Violence is perpetrated in a traditional Indian home, including extended family setting.

Social pressures, stigma, shame, fear of family breakdown, dominance of husbands' ideals, desires etc. set up barriers to acknowledging Domestic violence, barriers to using DV services. (O'Connor, Manjula 2010 http://www.mentalhealthvic.org.au/index.php?id=184&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=52&cHash=8d13f9585f5ef7db4cc95d76797a4c23).

Indian women do not use DV services, until it is very late. They suffer in silence and suffer depression, and become suicidal. Indian women have among the highest suicide rates in the world and DV is a strong predictor of suicidal ideation.

Indian International Students-- The students are temporary migrants but do not get the privileges and assistance of other migrants. They are here as guests of the Australian Government and the Australian Community. The government has a responsibility to help them connect with the broader community.

Australia India Society of Victoria has created 'Australian CULTURE awareness Course'.

This course gives the students awareness of values and traditions of Australian Society, some possible ways of addressing the cultural gap. The course was much appreciated by a pilot of 50 students. They said it was valuable information. We contend the course would enhance their self confidence, make social friends within

and outside their ethnic groups , minimize mis-communication with others, increase security.
(http://www.immi.gov.au/students/student-submissions/_pdf/028-australia-india-society-victoria.pdf)

The Indian elderly are isolated and there is little interaction with the younger Indians. This makes them vulnerable to depression, once gain unrecognized and untreated. They need a meeting point.

The Indian women need a community center as a meeting point.

Recommendations

‘Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society’

Recommendation 1

We submit a strong request for funding research on how to help Indian women caught in Domestic Violence(DV) situations.

We are currently running a pilot community participation program- research and action project using a novel approach FORUM THEATRE to investigate the barriers to acknowledging DV and Using DV services and cultural drivers of DV, exploring EARLY INTERVENTION Strategies.

Currently the priority of Federal Government Grants is on Preventive research. In the mean time thousands of women are suffering. We need to address the needs of the women currently suffering by expanding this innovative design.

We request Government funding for this community participation Project on DV. This will raise community discussion, exploration of best methods to help Indian women in DV and early intervention strategies..

Recommendation 2

‘Indian International Students .’-Every effort should be made to help them get connected to the main stream culture.

They would leave the country with positive feelings about Australia.

We propose the innovative ‘ Australian CULTURE awareness Course ‘to become compulsory for all students , within 2-3 weeks of arrival.

The funding arrangements could be sorted between the Victorian Government, Federal government and local educators.

Recommendation 3

The Indian elderly are isolated and there is little interaction with the younger Indians. The Indian women need a center as a meeting point.

We recommend a Community Centre be funded immediately for the use of all generations of Indian migrant community- in the SOUTH EASTERN Victoria and in the Western suburbs with funding for staff to promote activities for women , the elderly and the sport for the young.