



**Australian Parliament
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Submission no. 464**

P.O. Box 61
Oakleigh Vic 3166
Tel - 0466340412
contact@agmc.org.au
www.agmc.org.au
ABN – 77 475 631 917

23 May 2011

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

VIA EMAIL: jscm@aph.gov.au

Dear Inquiry,

The AGMC Inc is a peak body for individuals/groups from a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer “GLBTIQ” multicultural background. The AGMC Inc aims to represent the interests of Australian GLBTIQ individual/groups from a multicultural background. It does this primarily by recognising the interests of GLBTIQ multicultural individuals/groups and raising their profile within the wider GLBTIQ and multicultural communities. The AGMC Inc. encourages the participation and contribution of GLBTIQ from a Multicultural background within GLBTIQ and multicultural communities. It aims to promote, enable and disseminate knowledge on issues relevant to GLBTIQ multicultural individuals/groups through discussion, research, publishing and other means. In addition the AGMC Inc. encourages and supports the formation and growth of GLBTIQ multicultural groups.

We thank the Committee for giving us the opportunity to make this late submission.

This submission has attempted to address particular themes in the Terms of Reference and accordingly is set out accordingly below:

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda; and
2. The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

The AGMC Inc strongly supports the role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda, however, it must be one that is real, owned by participants and achieves outcomes. In the past the AGMC Inc has made submissions as to the absence of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer "GLBTIQ" in the discourse on social inclusion and therefore the lack of a voice has been a real issue. There is no point in being tokenistic as to including – or giving a voice to people- unless that voice is allowed to be spoken and then heard. Equality must mean equality in every which way – human rights are indivisible and belong to all, and the Federal government must develop programs to impart and build on this.

It is essential we recognise the contribution we gain from our diverse communities. In Australia there are a number of culturally based GLBTIQ communities. These groups have traditionally been formed to provide social support for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that identify as GLBTIQ. In 2003, the groups came together in a community building / strengthening effort to promote greater understanding in a truly multicultural, diverse sense. In October 2004, the groups held the Inaugural Australian Multicultural GLBTIQ Conference "Living and Loving in Diversity" at the St Kilda Town Hall in Victoria¹. For the first time (in Australia and overseas) a highly successful Conference addressing the 'dual edged sword' – or intersection of sexual orientation/gender identity and cultural/ religious background was explored as people tried to work out where they 'best

¹ Please view www.agmc.org.au for our history and purpose – accessed 24 May 2011

fit'. Following this highly successful conference, the not for profit organisation, the Australian Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Multicultural Council Inc. (AGMC Inc) was created. In nearly 7 years we have grown from strength to strength as we bring communities together. We have Muslims and Jews on the same committee working together – regardless of the conflict that occurs in other parts of the world. We have created cookbooks from different cultures and backgrounds and ensure our voice is heard in the GLBTIQ community. In addition to ensure we work within our purpose - we take part in the Victorian State government's Cultural Diversity Week and the Federal government's Harmony Week.

Settlement and participation

3. Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society; and
4. Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

It is essential that settlement programmes allow people to become 'who they are'. We regularly get emails, calls and letters from people who are not open about their GLBTIQ status as they are afraid of the community that they come from will reject them – and there is no support offered to them to explore health, social, or legal options. One of the greatest fears we have from people – is the fear they will 'lose' their cultural ties or support network and so do not allow their GLBTIQ status to be known. The obvious risks here are many – what comes to mind are health issues, depression, mental illness, internalised homophobia, self harm – the list is endless. We need to support our multicultural communities to be strong enough to embrace diversity within their communities, not just from the wider community. This is a constant challenge, but the Federal government can make this happen.



P.O. Box 61
Oakleigh Vic 3166
Tel - 0466340412
contact@agmc.org.au
www.agmc.org.au
ABN – 77 475 631 917

National productive capacity

5. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity;
6. The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants; and
7. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises.

The AGMC Inc has been a vocal member of the previous Victorian Labour government's Ministerial Advisory Committee's and therefore ensured that GLBTIQ and multicultural are not ignored. As the AGMC Inc is based in Melbourne, it has had the opportunity to work closely with organisations here, including within the GLBTIQ community and outside. The AGMC Inc is a member of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria and very vocal on many leading advocacy organisations in the GLBTIQ sector.

Regards,

Alyena Mohummadally
Chair
On behalf of AGMC Inc.