

Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

Attn: Committee on Migration

To Committee Members:

My submission is based simply from the view of an ordinary wife and mother of a migrant family to Australia. I am an Australian citizen having moved from New Zealand being the country of my birth.

While the cultures of Australia and New Zealand do share many similar ideals, the transition into the Australian culture was nevertheless still a hurdle at times. I have been a resident for 12 years and I still find there are new aspects of Australian culture to be discovered.

There are some important factors I have found in order to integrate into Australian society.

1. A willingness to get to know Australian people.
2. A willingness to adapt to the Australian mannerisms and culture.
3. To respect and participate in the important cultural events celebrated by Australians. These are – Australia day, Anzac Day, Easter and Christmas Day. These are what help to shape the Australian society and should never be denigrated or modified into something else so as to have multicultural appeal. I came to this country and these events are what are important to its society and it is I who must adapt, not the other way around. If I did not make any effort to be involved in these same events and other activities which define Australia's way of life, I am making no effort then to integrate. For the government and society to change these and any other facets which help to identify Australian culture by accommodating other people groups such as those from Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist backgrounds (or any other), in fact works to the detriment of Australian society, not to its benefit.

It is my view that in order to build a strong Australian society that the important aspects to Australian society in fact ought to be strengthened and promoted at all costs. This should also include the continuance of the Judeo-Christian model of ethics, which Australia has always been based on, and is imperative to a just and well balanced inclusive society.

I read a wonderful account of the Australian Light Horseman in the First World War, on a cold December day ending up in Bethlehem. Dog tired they made their beds in the animal feeding troughs, i.e. a manger. They associated these mangers with Christmas and family so far away, which to me epitomises so simply what was the most important thing in their minds, about their Australian roots.

Therefore, I believe the government needs to understand that these things which define Australians are the key to an integrated society. I think refugees in particular ought to be exposed to Christian ideals and it should not be hidden away like it's some terribly offensive irrelevant aspect of Australian culture. It's part of what makes Australia, Australia! The Judeo –Christian principles actually enhance freedom and a more harmonious and stable society than those not based on these principles. Just have a look around the world at what countries have on-going conflict –in the majority of cases they have no Christian belief system, and isn't this oppression what some of these refugees are trying to escape from after-all?

Finally I submit to the committee that there is a two- fold response.

1. Migrants and refugees ought to be free to maintain their religious beliefs, but this should not impinge or have any influence on any facet of Australian culture and beliefs. For the government to take the position that it has to change things because it might offend some minority group's beliefs, are simply pandering to a minority, at the expense of the majority, and are a disincentive to integration. It creates a separatist environment rather than one which encourages participation within the existing cultural values. Therefore the government must look at ways for migrants and refugees to learn to adapt to Australian culture, not the other way round, if Australian ideals are to be maintained and embraced.

2. The Australian way of life, including its Judeo- Christian principles, are to be strengthened, celebrated and communicated within the fabric of society and to prospective refugees and migrants because this is what makes it free, prosperous and harmonious.

Yours faithfully

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