SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO MULTICULTURALISM AND MIGRATION

Introduction

This submission on behalf of the University of Technology Sydney Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre (UTS:CCS) proposes that the Committee should adopt a perspective that we describe as “New Multiculturalism”. Given that Multiculturalism has experienced many years of marginalisation, resource-depletion, and evidence-free policy, we strongly endorse the decision of the Australian government to re-assert the value of multiculturalism as a policy parameter for the whole of government. Moreover we particularly endorse the announcement of the Anti-Racism partnership strategy as a sign that government recognises the important role such pro-active engagement against inter-group hostility will play in improving social inclusion and social cohesion. Our submission draws on the experience of our UTS:CCS research members, who have produced since the formation of the Centre in 2007 an important concentrations of evidence, and evidence-based policy discussion on issues of multiculturalism and migrant settlement.

Summary of Key Points in Submission

UTS:CCS proposes the Committee adopt the idea of a New Multiculturalism, which would go beyond the current Government position by:

- creating national legislation that provides a human rights structure for Multiculturalism in Australia;
- establishing a strong research capacity linking researchers, policy makers, civil society and business, separate from but supported by government, that is both policy and inquiry driven;
- building effective settlement programs that ensure labour market participation and reduce the processes of de-skilling that affect many immigrants;
- developing a media and public culture strategy that recognises and respects the cultural diversity of Australia, and ensuring it appears strongly in the media and the arts;
- support anti-racism as one critical side of the settlement experience.

Who we are and what we do

Cosmopolitan Civil Societies is an interdisciplinary research initiative at the University of Technology, Sydney, that brings together scholars in the broad social sciences and humanities.
Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Terms of Reference and UTS:CCS responses

Our submission responds to the terms of Reference that frame the Committee’s deliberations. Furthermore we would ask for the opportunity to address the Committee on our recommendations.

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

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

“Multiculturalism” has re-emerged as a key parameter for whole of government interventions in our increasingly complex and evolving society. After years of hostility from that part of Australian society most comfortable with [its] monocultural tradition, reflected in a (false) distinction between integration and multiculturalism, the Government in February 2011 re-asserted the centrality of the concept as an organising principle in the delivery of public services and underlying social cohesion. “Multiculturalism” has two lives: as a social philosophy that promotes a particular orientation to societies composed of citizens from many different cultural origins, AND as a framework for the delivery of services in culturally diverse societies. Its philosophical origins in the 1970s and its practical establishment in the 1978 Galbally Report suggest that the concept itself requires renewal. In the past thirty-five years globalisation has intensified, the Internet has been created, and population movements have accelerated. New communities have entered Australian society and struggled to find a place here. Australia’s philosophical and policy settings have not kept pace. Indeed the failure to regularly refresh the ideas and practices from a solid empirical research base, with a consequential tendency to abandon the debate purely to the realm of emotion and populist pressure groups, has contributed to both social and policy crises.

A “New Multiculturalism” is required to re-set the policy parameters and accept the contemporary challenge of a “Multiculturalism for All Australians”, first laid out in 1976. A “New Multiculturalism” firstly identifies the values and approaches that have resilience and should remain, and then identifies the issues that are poorly or not at all addressed, and posits additional initiatives.

The Multiculturalism of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and the ‘Noughties began from two important ideas: that for migrants to Australia their “ethnic identities” and cultures were crucial for their well-being, and that immigrants entered a society that discriminated against them and failed to provide them with real opportunities. The two pillars were those of culture and rights. The aim of policy originally was to
ensure rights, enable access, and ensure equitable outcomes and cultural preservation. The issue of migrant rights drove the pressure for multiculturalism, even though it was always leavened by an awareness of the “two-way” conversation: immigration to Australia would change migrants but also change their Australian neighbours. By 1989 Multiculturalism gained an important new dimension - social justice; and the public debate had begun on what form of Multiculturalism Act Australia should have. A decade later the situation had shifted: the shadow of “tribalisation” (promoted by Prof Geoffrey Blainey) began to haunt the debate, social justice was removed from the policy settings (to be replaced by a less meaningful and effective reference to equity), and the mood was shifting away from multiculturalism towards a more assimilationist approach. In particular the independent research resource and national forum provided by the Bureau of Immigration Multicultural and Population Research was closed in 1996, ensuring that inquiry-driven research was effectively removed from the policy process. Instead a much smaller program-oriented research function was retained in the Immigration Department, offering a very constrained evidence base, driven by the political priorities of the government of the day, and the program responsibilities of the bureaucracy. The national research conversations that had been so important as an interface for research, policy and community discussions essentially disappeared. Moreover leading political voices rejected the idea that Australian values might be modified by engagement with immigrant communities, re-asserting the dominant position of a supposed core culture, demanding that immigrants accept what they found and modify their lives to fit.

By the middle of the first 21st century decade, multiculturalism had lost much of its leverage as a force for social change and improved well-being, driven down by spreading apprehension that the acknowledgement and endorsement of cultural diversity would lead to division, violence and disharmony. Attention had become focused on the threats posed by “home-brewed” terrorism, with public resources flowing towards “de-radicalisation” of Muslim youth. Public discourses were replete with intimations of violence, social dissolution, and alien invasions. Over the next five years further damage was done to the acceptance of human rights, with many rather different groups seeing the sea-change as one that licensed inter-group hostility, vilification and violence. The consequences of this shift in sentiment and leadership became clearer during 2009 and 2010, with the upsurge of racist violence directed at the unexpected target of Indian international students. Public policy had no effective base from which to respond, with denial of racism by political leaders simply adding accelerant to the flames, embittering the victims and emboldening the perpetrators.

The establishment in 2009 of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council after three or more years without a community advisory framework allowed greater public participation in the policy process. Following fairly low key consultations, AMAC produced a report to Government in April 2010. ‘The People of Australia” sought to reclaim the middle-ground for multiculturalism, proposing stronger government affirmation of the policy, a strong anti-racism strategy, and greater support for culturally diverse communities. It did not however resuscitate the policy program of the early 1990s, that had foregrounded the need for a Multicultural Act for Australia. The first apparent (negative) reaction to the report (neither of the major Party groups took a multicultural policy into the 2010 Federal election) occurred in the wake of the election, with the new Government removing the position of Parliamentary
Secretary for Multicultural Affairs. Meanwhile the political ground appeared to be further shifting away from multiculturalism, with leaders in Germany, France and Great Britain rejecting the concept as a failure.

When the Australian government announced its own “The People of Australia” policy in February 2011, it essentially accepted the AMAC report’s recommendations. The implementation process remains unclear, but it has taken into account the whole-of-government approach, the importance of social inclusion, and the initiatives needed to create a society-wide push for anti-racism programs. It went no further, avoiding what we will argue are the critical questions of a legislative framework for the new multiculturalism, and the importance of an independent research capacity to stimulate and sustain wide-spread public conversation about Australia’s cosmopolitan future.

We propose to the Committee that a New Multiculturalism would retain key parts of policies developed (and in some cases abandoned) over the past generation:

- drawing on Australia’s international UN convention responsibilities (not only those in the ICERD but also in the broader human rights conventions and in the conventions on religion, migrant workers, and people resident outside their countries of origin), delineate and ensure the effective implementation of “rights” to which Australia has been a signatory;
- clarify the outcomes sought for immigrants in the first phases of settlement, ensuring through access and equity the quality and relevance of services;
- recognising that both specialist and generalist services and programs are necessary to ensure equity.

The New Multiculturalism would introduce (or recover) key concepts, including that:
- ethnic and Australian are complementary not antagonistic identities;
- globalisation has enabled the mobility of diasporic communities that are often trans-national, carrying a number of national passports, offering much more subtle and fluid identities, especially for second-generation and later citizens;
- Australian society is created through all its citizens, so that multiculturalism has to recognise, respect and incorporate the “charter” cultures of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales;
- diaspora communities in Australia include large numbers of temporary migrants, including 457 and international student categories, whose presence multiculturalism has to recognise, respect and incorporate;
- multiculturalism has to recognise and respect the presence and prior ownership of the Land by the Indigenous peoples, whom
- multiculturalism is essentially a human rights policy which can be expressed through all forms of public activity;
- racism and therefore anti-racism is a multi-directional phenomenon, that can both affect culturally diverse communities and have perpetrators in those communities;
- Australia’s reservation to Article 4 of the UN CERD should be rescinded, permitting the criminalisation of racial vilification;
a national legislative framework should be created that enshrines Multiculturalism within the range of UN conventions to which Australia is a signatory, including CERD, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Rights, Trauma and Torture, and the Rights of the Child.

While the Government policy “The People of Australia” acknowledges the importance of social inclusion recognising cultural diversity and social inequality, this has been a long-time coming and has yet to show significant outcomes. CCS members have strong records of policy-related research on social capital creation, one of the key concepts used to determine the extent of social inclusion in a community. CCS researchers are actively involved in debates about social inclusion and multiculturalism. This relationship was foregrounded at the 2008 CCS conference 4Rs: respect, rights, recognition, reconciliation. The Conference strongly supported the extension of social inclusion to cover problems of cultural, linguistic and social exclusion for ethnic minorities. At the time the Social Inclusion policies of government had identified recency of immigrant and refugee arrival as a factor in unemployment, but had not made any policy-related deductions from these findings, and had not referenced cultural diversity as a social inclusion parameter.

CCS pursued this issue with the Social Inclusion Board Chair and members, arguing that cultural dimensions of social disadvantage, and cultural barriers to social participation, should be made a core part of Australian social inclusion priorities. The welcome decision to include such dimensions in the 2010 Report of the Social Inclusion Board and its greater elaboration in the Government’s response to “The People of Australia” demonstrated however that nearly two decades of marginalisation of multicultural perspectives in government policy have seriously undermined the evidence base for cultural diversity inclusion. This is recognised by the Government’s statement that disaggregation of service access data will be a future priority for evaluation of the quality of service delivery.

No national research was available to the Board that could allow it to make a declarative statement as to the status of culturally diverse groups within the social inclusion agenda. At best the Board could point to the work of Prof Kevin Dunn and his national associates, which provide indicative sample-based reflections on experiences and extent of racism, and the impact of racism on mental health well-being. While these perspectives are important, they have yet to be resourced at the level of many other indicators of disadvantage and exclusion to ensure robust, deep and sustained data for policy development and evaluation.

As part of the Federal Governments social inclusion agenda, CCS researchers have been at the forefront in discussions about human rights education in the community and in particular in the curriculum. Our searches have investigated how teachers and schools are dealing with the challenges and opportunities of working in ethnically diverse classroom environments (Burridge and Chodkiewicz, 2008, 2010). We have held several forums on women and human rights and another in May 2010 titled Human rights: sites of vulnerability for refugees and migrants. We have also made submissions to the National Consultations on human rights in 2009 which highlighted that a greater focus is required on the needs of
marginalized peoples in our community as well as the importance of promoting a culture of human rights which should be embedded in our national curriculum.

What is now needed is a clear articulation of the relations between cultural diversity and social inclusion, a clear set of criteria across government for determining the range of impacts that their programs could and should have in relation to cultural diversity issues, and far more robust and extensive research incorporated into social inclusion on cultural diversity. Thus cultural diversity parameters of social inclusion such as recency of arrival, linguistic capacity, education, qualification recognition, trauma and torture survival, disability, mental health status, physical health status, and family structure should all be operationalised, quantified, and calculated into the base line understanding of social inclusion. From that point on, cultural diversity and its operant elements should be “mainstreamed” into the assessment of needs, development of programs, delivery of accessible services, and assessment of quality of outcomes.

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

While CCS endorses the importance of identifying the contribution of diaspora communities to Australia’s international relations, we are disappointed that the framing of the reference excludes Africa, the Americas and “less immediate” parts of the Asia-Pacific region. We believe that globalisation is stimulating many different opportunities for Australia’s future, and should not be constrained by excising parts of the planet that do not fit the pre-conceptions evident in the terms of reference.

As indicated by the reference title, globalisation is fundamentally transforming Australia’s external and internal relations. Major diasporic communities whose countries of origin are also major players in Australia’s economic security are now a new feature of our society, not typically the case in the earlier post-war period (other than for the UK). Before our largest source countries of immigrants did not play a major role in our economy, while countries which have been of major economic importance have tended not to be major sources of immigrants. With the rapid growth of India and China as economic and population partners, Australia faces a new era of multicultural policy challenges.

CCS members’ research on immigrant communities has documented many of their contributions, economically, socially and culturally. The CCS associated web project “Making Multicultural Australia” (http://multiculturalaustralia.edu.au) and its SBS extension (http://www.sbs.com.au/immigrationnation/interactive) demonstrate the critical roles that diasporic communities have played from the outset in the evolution of Australia’s public culture, infrastructure, industry, agriculture and ways of life. More recently we have shown (Collins et al. 2011; Jakubowicz et al. 2011) the important ways in which young Muslim Australians are helping change Australia’s cultural world-view, and contributing to our sense of diversity. We have also canvassed the important role of Chinese and Muslim communities in the changing political scene in Australia (Jakubowicz 2011, 2007), stressing the importance to social inclusion of different cultural approaches on participation, identifying some of the negative consequences of marginalisation and exclusion for the whole society.
CCS has a strong emphasis on cultural diversity and the environment. Prof Heather Goodall is currently exploring four important dimensions of this question. This research demonstrates the intimate inter-relationship of immigrant and Indigenous communities in ways of which most Australians have little or any awareness. Environment - both access and interaction in natural environments and the question of access to environmental justice - is a theme in them all:

1) Indian Ocean interrelations - movements of people, culture and ideas around the IO, focusing on Sydney as a port city (includes historical and current case studies)
2) environment and society: relations of recently immigrant, Anglo and Aboriginal communities in high diversity urban environments (south western Sydney, Georges river)
3) Rivers, resources and cultural diversity (the Oral histories of fishing on the Murray Darling project is interviewing Aboriginal, Anglo and the occasional immigrant (very occasional, despite our best efforts! but including women) fishing people
4) Interrelationships between Aboriginal families and Indian Ocean immigrants (AIATSIS funded Mauritian/Aboriginal research; Indian Ocean study of series of seafaring 'lascars' who married into Aboriginal families in south eastern Australia).

**Settlement and participation**

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

One of the problems facing innovation in settlement programs lies in the difficulty in getting good information, and the paucity of ways in which it can be circulated across the nation. While DIAC commissions some research in this area, it is constrained as always by the control that DIAC places on such research, the political sensitivity that requires ministerial approval of release, and the public communication goals of the Department. Thus thinking “outside the square” has not been a major feature of programs in recent years; there are few opportunities to ensure widespread “crowd-sourcing” of ideas. That having been said, there is enough research to show that in the management of off-shore arrivals in particular, the Australian system seems to have the effect of exacerbating trauma, and diminishing the capacity of new settlers from that source to re-establish their lives.

UTS:CCS has a strong record in exploring media and new media opportunities in relation to cultural diversity. Successful integration has to occur not only in education, employment, housing, and community relations, but also in the country’s public culture. Public policy has not grappled with this question; in fact it has moved away from the issue. The Australia Council for instance terminated its Multicultural Arts Committee some years ago, and is cutting back on this perspective across its programs. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation has systematically avoided its multicultural charter responsibilities, while governments of both political persuasions have avoided appointing culturally diverse Australians to its Board. Commercial broadcast media do not reflect the cultural diversity of Australia, and fairly regularly find themselves embroiled in racist controversies. The Indian student crisis demonstrated how poorly the Australian media understood and represented Australia’s diversity. We
believe a systematic strategy across the media and the national education curricula is required in order to develop a responsive, tolerant and informed public culture. In particular, an evidence-based program in relation to cyber-racism, mental health, and social cohesion is of immediate relevance.

2. Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

UTS:CCS proposes that Australia needs a national research capacity to underpin the planning, implementation and evaluation of settlement strategies, and associated community relations programs. Australia, one of the world’s greatest migration nations, is currently experiencing rapid increases in permanent and temporary migration. These new immigrants and sojourners not only become workers, but neighbours and school chums in the suburbs and, increasingly, in regional and rural Australian towns. Over the next decade Australia will face a number of major immigration and immigrant settlement issues. Strategies that increase immigrant attraction and ensure retention will become increasingly important, given the current global competition for scarce skilled and professional migrants. Most Australians live in neighbourhoods of great – and changing - cultural diversity producing the possibility of cosmopolitan, inter-communal dialogue, but also threats of racialised conflict. The nation will have to address the settlement issues of increasing cultural diversity, including troubled relations between some cultural and ethno-religious groups, inter-ethnic youth relations, the incorporation of cultural diversity into media and cultural production, and the building of cultural industries in creative cities that draw on that diversity.

Strong, independent and inter-disciplinary evidence-based research is required to assist policy development in these areas, including housing and urban planning, education, health and social services, racism and local community relations. Yet research funding and research infrastructure to support such evidence-based research is severely lacking since the demise of the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research. There is an urgent need to build the research infrastructure and funding to enable strategic and coordinated research on migration, cultural diversity and community relations.

We thus propose the establishment of a Migration, Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Research Institute. This would bring together government, business and community stakeholders to fund and steer research, with a program of competitively-funded research grant and research networking activities. The Institute would convene national research conferences, policy workshops, and end-user symposia. The Migration, Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Research Institute will also play the critical role of linking the Australian immigration research and policy community into important international migration research networks, such as the International Metropolis and the IMISCOE network. Such an Institute could also be integrated with proposals for a Population Institute currently under discussion by the Population Sustainability review under Minister Burke. It is feasible that the new Australian Multicultural Council might play a role in this research network and resource.

Potential partner organisations might include:
Government (DIAC, AHRC, relevant Federal and State Government Departments, Community Relations/Multicultural Commissions, state–based Human Rights Commissions; Local Government organisations)
Industry (Institute for Cultural Diversity; media organisations; sectors of the economy employing temporary residents; Diversity Council of Australia; etc ).
Research Centres (Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives (ICEPA) (Victoria); Centre for Multicultural and Community Development (The University of the Sunshine Coast); The McCaughey Centre (The University of Melbourne); Centre for Research on Social Inclusion (Macquarie University); The Prejudice Mob Clearing House (Murdoch University); Centre for Cosmopolitan Civil Societies (University of Technology Sydney); The Centre for Cultural Research (University Western Sydney) etc.

National productive capacity

1. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia’s long term productive capacity;

Australia's migration program has been reoriented towards skilled migration in the last two decades, and research suggests that this, together with changes in welfare entitlements for new arrivals, has increased employment rates for migrants. However, there is also evidence that migrants do not necessarily gain employment in their chosen field, or at the level they had achieved in their home country. In other words, there is a process of deskilling of migrants in Australia (Ho and Alcorso 2004). We need much more evidence-based research to examine this more comprehensively.

To some extent, this is a result of racial discrimination, as shown by Andrew Leigh and colleagues (2009), who documented that job applicants with Chinese and other ethnic surnames had to submit far more applications to be successful, compared to Anglo-Australians. Deskilling may also reflect the lack of employment services and work experience programs for migrants. CCS recommends expanding publicly funded programs such as the Specialist Migrant Placement Program and other programs that facilitate paid work experience and mentoring schemes.

Selected Recent Research and Policy Publications

Burridge

**Collins**


Australia” *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, Number 61 June 2008 pp. 244-266.


**Collins et al**


Goodall

Funded Research:


2010 – 2011: Talking Fish: Oral Histories of Fishing on the Murray Darling River System. Contract from NSW Industry and Innovation (previously NSW DPI and Fisheries); funded by the Murray Darling Basin Authority. $67,200

2008 – 2010: Intercolonial Networks of the Indian Ocean: ARC Discovery DP0877459, with A/Prof Devleena Ghosh, Prof Heather Goodall, Prof Stephen Muecke, Prof Michael Pearson.

Books:

Forthcoming: (drafted but not finalized)


Published:

Major Report
2010: Denis Byrne, Heather Goodall, Allison Cadzow: Place-Making in national parks: a case study of park-use by Arabic-speaking and Vietnamese Australians on the Georges River, NSW, DECCW, online.

Book Chapters
Forthcoming 2011: (accepted and in copy editing)

In Press for 2010 publication:

Published

Ho


Ho, C. 2008, 'Introduction' in Dreher, Tanja and Ho, Christina (eds), Beyond the Hijab Debates: New Conversations on Gender, Race and Religion, Cambridge Scholars Press, UK.


Jakubowicz


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CulturalDiversity News (Administrator), http://culturaldiversity.net.au

“Immigration Nation” website, script and script editing, concept development, production adviser, Chocolate Liberation Front, Melbourne (launch January 2011).

“I mmigration Nation”, 3 part documentary, research advice, script editing, historical adviser (broadcast January 2011), Renegade Factual, Melbourne.