

Chapter 1

Introduction

Establishment

1.1 On 29 November 2016, the Senate resolved that the Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (committee) be established on 27 March 2017. The committee is to inquire into and report on ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion, with particular reference to:

- a. the views and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities;
- b. the adequacy and accessibility of settlement and social inclusion services and resources available to individuals and communities;
- c. the adequacy of existing data collection and social research on racially motivated crimes;
- d. the impact of discrimination, vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;
- e. the impact of political leadership and media representation on the prevalence of vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;
- f. how to improve the expected standards of public discourse about matters of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;
- g. how to better recognise and value the contribution that diverse communities bring to Australian social and community life;
- h. the potential benefits and disadvantages of enshrining principles of multiculturalism in legislation;
- i. the potential benefits and disadvantages of establishing a legislative basis for the Multicultural Advisory Council, or for an ongoing Multicultural Commission; and
- j. any related matters.¹

1.2 On 15 June 2017, the Senate agreed to amend the resolution of 29 November 2016 to enable the committee to conduct the inquiry through the use of subcommittees.²

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 21–29 November 2016, pp. 659–660.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 43–14 June 2017, p. 1410.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 The committee advertised the inquiry on its website and wrote to a number of individuals and organisations, inviting submissions by 12 May 2017. The committee continued to accept submissions after this date. In response, the committee received 104 submissions. For administrative purposes, a further 47 submissions were categorised as 'form letters' (or variations of form letters).³ All correspondence accepted by the committee is listed at Appendix 1.

1.4 The committee held three public hearings for the inquiry. Public hearings were held on 27 June 2017 in Melbourne, 29 June 2017 in Sydney, and 3 August 2017 in Bendigo. The witnesses who appeared before the committee are listed at Appendix 2.

1.5 The committee thanks all the individuals and organisations who made submissions and who gave evidence to assist the committee with its inquiry.

Structure of the report

1.6 Chapter one provides a broad overview of multiculturalism in Australia to provide context for the inquiry.

1.7 Chapter two examines some of the evidence presented to the committee regarding the adequacy of settlement and social inclusion services.

1.8 Chapter three discusses information received on the impact of racial discrimination and the representation of multicultural groups in the media.

1.9 Chapter four looks at the impact of political leadership and public discourse, and how multiculturalism might be strengthened through education.

1.10 Chapter five examines some of the issues associated with legislation and data collection.

Multiculturalism in Australia

1.11 Australia is a multicultural nation, with the population identifying with over 300 ancestries. According to the 2016 Census, the most common ancestries are English, Australian, Irish, Scottish, Chinese and Italian.⁴

1.12 The 2016 Census also revealed high levels of migration, with one in four people in Australia (26 per cent) being born overseas. This figure represented a one percentage point rise from the figure recorded in the 2011 Census.⁵

3 A submission was categorised as a form letter where it contained a specific, or easily identifiable, template of words. A submission was included as a variation to a particular form letter where the template of words was modified but could still be identified as having derived from a form letter, or where the template was supplemented with additional material.

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2024.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Australia Revealed, 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2024.0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

1.13 Australians are affiliated with a range of religions. Whilst Christianity remains the predominant religion in Australia, the overseas-born population also reported affiliations with Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. Overall, the overseas-born population reported lower levels of religion than those born in Australia (27 per cent compared with 34 per cent).⁶

1.14 In addition to those born overseas, Australia is also home to a diverse number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, with over 250 different language groups identified across the nation. In 2016, there was an estimated 650 000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Australia (nearly three per cent of the total population).⁷

Views of Australians on multiculturalism

1.15 Multiculturalism in Australia has enjoyed renewed public interest over the last decade. The recent parliamentary inquiry into freedom of speech in Australia,⁸ and the 2013 inquiry into migration and multiculturalism in Australia,⁹ have each drawn attention to the diversity of Australian views. Across the globe, political and world events in Europe and the United States have also shaped how Australians think of and engage with multiculturalism.

1.16 Each year, the Scanlon Foundation, in partnership with Monash University, conducts a series of surveys on Australian attitudes to social cohesion, immigration and population issues. Results are mapped and compared annually.¹⁰

1.17 According to the *2016 Mapping Social Cohesion survey*, 83 per cent of Australians agreed that multiculturalism has been good for Australia. 74 per cent felt that people of different national or ethnic groups in their local area got on well together. These figures indicate high levels of social cohesion in Australia and have been consistently high since the survey began in 2007.¹¹

5 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2024.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Australia Revealed, 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2024.0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2024.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Australia Revealed, 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2024.0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2024.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Australia Revealed, 2016*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2024.0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

8 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Freedom of speech in Australia*, February 2017, p. 1.

9 Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Inquiry into Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, March 2013, p. 2.

10 The Scanlon Foundation, *Surveys*, <http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/research/surveys/> (accessed 16 August 2017).

11 The Scanlon Foundation, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2016*, November 2016, pp. 14.

1.18 However, the results also show increased negativity regarding immigration intake and toward the proposition that 'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage' of minorities. This was also reflected in the Australian Bureau of Statistics *General Social Survey*, which found that 4.4 per cent of Australians disagreed with the statement 'it is a good thing for society to be comprised of different cultures'.¹²

Federal multicultural policy

1.19 Until the latter part of the 20th Century, Australia's approach to immigration excluded non-European immigration. The 'White Australia' policy remained in place until after World War II, before shifting toward policies around 'assimilation' and 'integration'.¹³ The Australian Government's first multicultural policy statement was introduced in 1973 by then Minister for Immigration, Mr Al Grassby MP, in a speech titled *A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future*.

1.20 Another historical moment in federal multicultural policy occurred in 1978 with completion of the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants (*Galbally Report*). Adopting the recommendations of the *Galbally Report*, the government then began to expand migrant settlement services and move toward a 'multiculturalism' policy framework.¹⁴

1.21 Since this time, the Australian Government has continued to introduce successive multicultural policy initiatives, including the Access and Equity Strategy in the 1980s, the establishment of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council in 2008, and the 2011 policy statement, *The People of Australia—Australia's Multicultural Policy*.¹⁵ Most recently, the Australian Government published its Multicultural Statement titled *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* on 20 March 2017.¹⁶

State and territory position

1.22 At present, all Australian states and territories have legislation and/or other instruments that focus on protecting and strengthening multiculturalism (Table 1).

12 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4159.0 – *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/exnote/4159.0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

13 See, for example, E Koleth, *Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australian and overseas*, Research paper, 6, 2010–11, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2010.

14 E Koleth, *Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australian and overseas*, Research paper, 6, 2010–11, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2010.

15 Department of Social Services, *Fact Sheet – Australia's Multicultural Policy*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/fact-sheet-australias-multicultural-policy> (accessed 16 August 2017).

16 The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, Prime Minister of Australia, and Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs, 'Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful', *Media Release*, 20 March 2017.

Table 1: State and territory multicultural legislation

Victoria	The <i>Multicultural Victoria Act 2011</i> refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a multicultural society. Other legislation includes the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> , the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> , and the <i>Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001</i> .
New South Wales	The <i>Multiculturalism NSW Act 2000</i> commits to creating opportunities and ensuring respect for people of all linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds.
South Australia	The <i>South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1980</i> established the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission to increase awareness and understanding of ethnic diversity; and to advise the government and public authorities on all matters relating to multiculturalism and ethnic affairs.
Western Australia	The <i>WA Charter of Multiculturalism 2004</i> is supported by the Office of Multicultural Interests, and recognises the diversity of language, religion, race, and ethnicity within Western Australia, and promotes an inclusive society.
Queensland	The <i>Multicultural Recognition Act 2016</i> complements existing government legislation, such as the <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991</i> , to promote a harmonious and inclusive community.
Tasmania	The <i>Tasmanian Multicultural Policy 2014</i> aims to enhance social cohesion, social and economic participation, and access to services for migrants and multicultural communities.
Australian Capital Territory	The <i>ACT Multicultural Framework 2015–20</i> outlines a vision for an inclusive and cohesive society which draws on people's cultural and linguistic diversity.
Northern Territory	The <i>Multicultural Participation Framework 2016–19</i> outlines the principles of multiculturalism and social cohesion. The Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs provides high level and strategic advice from the community to the government on matters pertaining to multicultural affairs.

Settlement and social inclusion services

1.23 Australia has a comprehensive program of settlement and social inclusion services that are administered primarily by the Department of Social Services.

The focus of these services is on improving English language, education and employment outcomes for new migrants,¹⁷ and include the following:

- The Humanitarian Settlement Services Program aims to provide practical support to humanitarian entrants for the first six to 12 months, such as through assisting with finding suitable long-term accommodation, registering with government services, and general orientation to Australian life;¹⁸
- The Complex Case Support program provides specialised and intensive care management services to eligible humanitarian entrants with exceptional needs which are beyond the scope of other settlement services;¹⁹
- The Adult Migrant English Program provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to help them learn foundation English language and settlement skills;²⁰
- Settlement Grants provide funding to assist humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants with a focus on fostering social and economic participation, personal well-being, independence and community connectedness;²¹
- Free translating services are available for people settling permanently in Australia to have personal documents translated into English during their initial two year settlement period;²² and
- Free interpreting services delivered by the Translating and Interpreting Service allow access to key services such as medical specialists, pharmacies, and real estate agencies.²³

17 Department of Social Services, *Submission 10*, p. 5.

18 Department of Social Services, *Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/humanitarian-settlement-services-hss> (accessed 16 August 2017).

19 Department of Social Services, *Complex Case Support Program*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/complex-case-support-programme> (accessed 16 August 2017).

20 Department of Education and Training, *Adult Migrant English Program*, <https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

21 Department of Social Services, *About Settlement Grants*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/settlement-grants/what-is-settlement-grants/about-settlement-grants> (accessed 16 August 2017).

22 Department of Social Services, *Free Translating Service*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settle-in-australia/help-with-english/free-translating-service> (accessed 16 August 2017).

23 Department of Social Services, *Free Interpreting Service*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settle-in-australia/help-with-english/free-interpreting-service> (accessed 16 August 2017).

1.24 On 27 July 2017, the Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs, Senator the Hon Zed Seselja, announced the redesigned suite of settlement services to be delivered through the new Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP). The HSP is stated to have a renewed focus on English language, education and employment, and will commence on 30 October 2017.²⁴

1.25 To support the delivery of settlement services, the *National Settlement Framework* was recently developed and released in November 2016. The Framework provides guidance for governments at Commonwealth, state and territory, and local levels to make planning decisions on the provision of settlement and support services, and to deliver coordinated client-centric services, informed by research and evaluation.²⁵

1.26 The *National Youth Settlement Framework* was also developed by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, with the support of the Australian Government. It focuses on supporting young people to become active and engaged members of society, and supports an evidence-based approach to best practice and measuring settlement outcomes for young people.²⁶

Australian Multicultural Advisory Council

1.27 The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council (AMAC) was launched on 17 December 2008 in Melbourne. On 30 April 2010, the AMAC presented its advice and recommendations on cultural diversity policy to the government of the day in a statement titled *The People of Australia*.

1.28 Following recommendations from AMAC to establish a new independent body, the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) was officially launched in August 2011.²⁷ The AMC receives secretariat support from the Department of Social Services. Its current term is from 16 December 2014 to 16 December 2017.

1.29 The AMC is tasked with providing advice to the government on multicultural affairs policy and programs, with particular focus on celebrating diversity, building more cohesive communities, promoting intercultural and interfaith understanding, and harnessing the economic and social benefits of a diverse population.²⁸

24 Senator the Hon Zed Seselja, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs, 'Better focus on employment, English and outcomes under the new humanitarian settlement program', *Media Release*, 27 July 2017.

25 Department of Social Services, *National Settlement Framework*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/national-settlement-framework> (accessed 5 August 2017).

26 Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *National Youth Settlement Framework*, <http://www.myan.org.au/our-work-with-the-sector/156/> (accessed 16 August 2017).

27 Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, *The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy*, December 2013, [p. 7].

28 Department of Social Services, *Australian Multicultural Council*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/australian-multicultural-council> (accessed 16 August 2017).

Anti-Discrimination Laws

1.30 In Australia, it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the basis of age, disability, race, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation, in certain areas of public life, including education and employment.²⁹ These laws are enshrined in the following legislation:

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*;
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*; and
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.

1.31 Complaints of discrimination on each of these grounds can be lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission and the relevant state and territory agencies. The Australian Human Rights Commission has the statutory power to receive, investigate and conciliate complaints of alleged discrimination and human rights breaches under these laws.³⁰

1.32 The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* gives effect to Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This Act aims to promote equality for all persons, regardless of race, colour or national or ethnic origin, and to make discrimination against people on these bases unlawful.³¹

National Anti-Racism Strategy

1.33 In addition to anti-discrimination law, the government opposes racial vilification and discrimination through the *National Anti-Racism Strategy* (the Strategy), which was launched in 2012. The Strategy aims to promote a clear understanding in the Australian community of what racism is, and how it can be prevented and reduced.³²

1.34 One of the Strategy's major outcomes is the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign. The campaign focuses on recognising that racism is unacceptable, and empowers individuals to prevent and respond effectively to acts of racism. It provides a central coordination point for anti-racism activities happening across Australia, and

29 Attorney-General's Department, *Australia's anti-discrimination law*, <https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Pages/Australias-Anti-Discrimination-Law.aspx> (accessed 16 August 2017).

30 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Legislation*, <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/legal/legislation> (accessed 16 August 2017).

31 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Legislation*, <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/legal/legislation> (accessed 16 August 2017).

32 Australian Human Rights Commission, *National Anti-Racism Strategy and Racism. It Stops with Me Campaign*, July 2012, p. 2.

gives individuals and organisations access to educational and other materials to promote anti-racism messages.³³

International models of multiculturalism

1.35 While a number of government agencies have responsibility for building social cohesion and addressing anti-social behaviour, multiculturalism in the United Kingdom (UK) is not affirmed in any constitutional, legislative or parliamentary instruments. Similar to the European model of multiculturalism, the UK places little emphasis on the responsibilities of new arrivals to adhere to their national systems and laws. The UK Prime Minister was once quoted as saying this has led to a 'failure of multiculturalism', causing cultural and religious minority groups to live separately from the rest of society.³⁴

1.36 Australian multiculturalism is most often compared to the Canadian model. In 1971, then Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, announced a federal policy of multiculturalism, and a commitment to support minority communities.³⁵ Two years later, Australia's Whitlam Government announced a similar shift toward a 'multi-cultural society'.³⁶ Canada enshrined its multiculturalism policy in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1988*, thereby recognising that all citizens have the right to celebrate their cultural diversity, and have equal protection under the law.³⁷ Australia currently has no such legislation in place.

1.37 Another commonly referred to example of multiculturalism is the New Zealand model. New Zealand's ancestry is similar to Australia in that the Indigenous communities have appealed for consultation in multiculturalism debates. New Zealand recognises its nation's first people through the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty is based on the principle of biculturalism, and provides the basis for recognition of the state with respect to the Māori people.³⁸

33 Australian Human Rights Commission, *National Anti-Racism Strategy and Racism. It Stops with Me Campaign*, <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/projects/national-anti-racism-strategy-and-racism-it-stops-me-campaign> (accessed 16 August 2017).

34 See, for example, Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 27; Anthony Heath, 'Has multiculturalism failed in the UK? Not really', *The Guardian*, 11 August 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/10/multiculturalism-uk-research> (accessed 16 August 2017).

35 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 5.

36 E Koleth, *Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australian and overseas*, Research paper, 6, 2010–11, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2010.

37 *Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1988*, Preamble.

38 Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, *Story: Biculturalism*, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biculturalism> (accessed 16 August 2017).

