

Chapter 3

Racial discrimination and representation of multicultural groups

3.1 According to the Scanlon Foundation, experiences of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnicity or religion has increased by five per cent since 2015. This is the highest level recorded in the Scanlon Foundation's surveys to date.¹ Further research shows that discrimination is most prevalent against those overseas-born of non-English speaking background, with the highest level of discrimination reported by South Sudanese.²

3.2 There is some debate in Australia about the prevalence of racism, and how it may have fluctuated over time.³ The Australian Psychological Society told the committee that racism does indeed persist, albeit it is expressed in different ways:

...while the expression of racism and prejudice may have changed over recent decades from overt to more covert and subtle forms, there is strong evidence to suggest that it is still prevalent in Australia⁴

3.3 Witnesses also described the 'unfinished' work of multiculturalism, suggesting that whilst levels of migration and cultural diversity in Australia are high, there is still significant work to do in building social cohesion and harmony amongst Australians of all racial and ethnic backgrounds:

This involves moving away from the approach which has characterised recent debates in Australia that conflate issues of immigration and citizenship with cultural diversity, and goes beyond a focus on 'food and festivals' to foster a community wide understanding of multiculturalism.⁵

3.4 This chapter examines the social, mental health and economic impact of racial discrimination, vilification, bigotry and exclusion on various culturally and linguistically diverse groups. It also explores the effect of media representation in strengthening or weakening multiculturalism in Australia, including the varied influence of commercial, public and social media.

1 The Scanlon Foundation, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2016*, November 2016, p. 4.

2 The Scanlon Foundation, *Australians Today: The Australia@2015 Scanlon Foundation Survey*, August 2016, pp. 60–77.

3 See, for example, R Martin, 'Is Australia Racist?', *Face Up To Racism*, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), 26 February 2017; B Wang, 'State of denial: Is Australia racist?', *It's Not A Race* audio podcast, 13 July 2017, ABC Radio National, accessed 13 July 2017.

4 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

5 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 61*, p. 3. Also see: Challenging Racism Project, *Submission 22*, [p. 4].

Social and mental health impacts

3.5 Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard that racial discrimination and vilification have extremely harmful effects on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Racial discrimination has the potential to erode social cohesion, and cause individuals to feel socially isolated and disempowered.⁶ It can also lead to poor physical and mental health outcomes. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission:

The stress of racial abuse has been shown to trigger physiological symptoms such as fear in the gut, rapid pulse rate and difficulty in breathing. Repeated exposure to it can contribute to conditions such as hypertension and post-traumatic stress disorder, even psychosis and suicide.⁷

3.6 The committee considered that racial discrimination, vilification, exclusion and bigotry are experienced differently by various cohorts of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including refugees, humanitarian entrants and survivors of torture and trauma; young people; second and third generation migrants; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Refugees, humanitarian entrants, and survivors of torture and trauma

3.7 Current global, political and media developments have caused Australia's newest arrivals to be particularly susceptible to racial, religious and cultural abuse.⁸ The committee was told that, as a refugee, adapting to a new life with a new set of laws, health and education systems, and lifestyle, is 'one of the hardest journeys of survival'.⁹ Any form of discrimination or exclusion is therefore harmful to an individual's settlement. As one former refugee shared:

...when refugee discrimination is applied, it is very hard to survive and very hard to feel a sense of belonging. It is hard to connect and to re-establish a new home and to feel a sense of belonging, engagement, trust and support, identity and life.¹⁰

3.8 RCOA noted that for those that have come from a torture or trauma situation, feeling unsafe and unwelcomed 'limits their capacity to heal and contribute to

6 See, for example, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, pp. 5–6; Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 13; Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 4.

7 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 9.

8 The Scanlon Foundation, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2016*, November 2016, p. 1.

9 Mr Marama Kufi, Member, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 3.

10 Mr Marama Kufi, Member, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 3.

Australian society'.¹¹ They may be unwilling to go to work for fear of experiencing harassment or abuse. They may be disengaged from their education and hesitant to contribute to classroom discussions. They may also feel unable to maintain their job or business due to racial abuse from the local community.¹²

3.9 For refugees, humanitarian entrants, and survivors, discrimination based on race, ethnicity, culture or religious belief can be crippling. As one migrant told the Australian Human Rights Commission, it is as if, despite their opportunity to settle in a new country, their 'liberty is incomplete'.¹³

Young people

3.10 Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard that experiences of racism and racial discrimination against young people can impact on their psychological development and identity formation.¹⁴ These individuals are at a key developmental stage in their lives, where they are learning to understand themselves and their place within their family, community, and broader Australian society. Negative social experiences can therefore lead to devastating mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety.¹⁵ Multicultural Youth South Australia noted:

Racism has a major impact on adolescent wellbeing, affecting self-esteem and confidence, psychological and physical safety, and trust in others, with young people at risk of internalising their experiences of racism, seeing themselves as rejected by society and believing that perhaps they should 'just go home'.¹⁶

3.11 The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network stated that experiences of racism can be a key factor in determining settlement outcomes:

Positive settlement in Australia for young people is inextricably connected to a sense of belonging amongst family members, peers, their own cultural community and the broader community – where cultural and religious diversity is valued and welcomed. Positive settlement can be profoundly impacted by experiences of exclusion, racism, discrimination, racial and cultural stereotyping and vilification.¹⁷

11 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 13. Also see: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., *Submission 47*, p. 4.

12 See, for example, Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 13; Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 5; Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, p. 4.

13 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 10.

14 See, for example, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *Submission 39*, p. 3; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Engaging Our Youth: Our Future*, December 2015, p. 45.

15 See, for example, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, p. 5.

16 Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

17 Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *Submission 39*, p. 3.

3.12 Witnesses and submitters warned that young people experiencing racism and discrimination are highly vulnerable to mental health impacts. According to Multicultural Youth South Australia, social exclusion can limit access to future life opportunities. It also causes young people to 'internalise negative stereotypes and generalisations and even accept and fulfil them'.¹⁸

3.13 The committee was told that reports about the 'Apex' gang in Victoria disproportionately focused on young people that had migrated from African countries. At a consultation held by the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, one participant revealed that young refugees are being 'singled out' because of their skin colour.¹⁹

3.14 Poor relationships between migrant youth and the local police were seen to exacerbate experiences of racial discrimination. Multicultural Youth South Australia pointed to research conducted in 2007 showing that half of all participants in the study reported regular racism from a range of sources, including peers, teachers, police, security guards and other authority figures, shop assistants and managers, as well as the general public.²⁰ They also reported 'disproportionate police surveillance and interference' whilst in public areas.²¹ Mr Eddie Micallef, a representative from the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria that has worked closely with migrant youth, gave an example:

I remember when I was involved out at Dandenong. At Noble Park station, the police said, 'Look, the young people there from Islander and African backgrounds are congregating around the station, and they don't even realise that they're doing something wrong.' I said to the inspector: 'Well, what are they doing wrong? They've got nowhere else to go.'²²

3.15 Witnesses urged the committee to look to people that work directly with youth, and empower them to take a lead in eliminating racism and discrimination. These included teachers, local police, and local community leaders. One young witness, Ms Cam Lu, stated:

...the reality is that racism and discrimination are still prevalent in our schools and community, and teachers and staff members still feel uncomfortable and are too scared to have the explicit conversations about race. It is harmful to say that we do not see race. When students experience racism and do not have the right support to debrief on it, they end up reflecting it on themselves—seeing themselves as the problem—and feel ashamed of their culture, and may in turn reject it. This can have

18 Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 4. Also see: Ms Cam Lu, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 28.

19 Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 8. Also see: Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

20 Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

21 Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

22 Mr Eddie Micallef, Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 20.

tremendous negative effects on their sense of identity, perpetuating a sense of loss, confusion and shame.²³

3.16 Several witnesses and submitters raised the need to better consult with young people, claiming that many have expressed the desire to engage and to be heard, but feel that they have been largely ignored.²⁴ In its submission, the Hume Interfaith Network Youth Group stated:

We want to be able to express our opinions in a legitimate way, and feed our knowledge back to you. To support how you make your strategic and organisational decision, but we find it too hard to break through your processes...we want to have a voice, so support us to do that.²⁵

Second and third generation migrants

3.17 Culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia vary significantly in terms of settlement period and perceived integration into Australian life. Following waves of migration in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, there are many second and third generation Australians of culturally diverse backgrounds for whom diversity is 'a fact of Australian society'.²⁶ The committee heard, however, that racial discrimination and vilification is not an unknown concept for these individuals. A representative from the Vietnamese Community in Australia told the committee:

Our second and third generation Australians of Vietnamese background experience life in Australia and discrimination and racism here very differently to how our older generations did. Many younger Australians of culturally diverse backgrounds still feel an incomplete acceptance by mainstream society. Different forms of exclusion and discrimination undermine a sense of belonging.²⁷

3.18 Witnesses explained that second and third generation migrants may struggle with understanding their identity, as their engagement and expression of cultural, ethnic or religious heritage is much more subtle and fluid.²⁸ These individuals are faced with a unique dilemma, and may often feel like they have to choose between their Australian identity and their cultural identity. Ms Huong Truong from the

23 Ms Cam Lu, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 28. Also see: Ms Maximus Po, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 27.

24 See, for example, Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 6; Ms Elizabeth Blades-Hamilton, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 43; Hume Interfaith Network Youth Group, *Submission 102*, [p. 2].

25 Hume Interfaith Network Youth Group, *Submission 102*, [p. 2].

26 Ms Huong Truong, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 12. Also see: Australian National Maritime Museum, *Australia's Immigration History*, <http://waves.anmm.gov.au/Immigration-Stories/Immigration-history> (accessed 16 August 2017).

27 Ms Huong Truong, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 11.

28 Professor Andrew Jakubowicz and Ms Ly Ly Lim, *Submission 8*, p. 5.

Vietnamese Community in Australia described this as 'trying to be Australian without pushing too hard on our differences'.²⁹ Ms Viv Nguyen shared her experience:

I came here at the age of 12 and I constantly walked that tightrope—'Am I Australian or am I Vietnamese' and 'Am I more or am I less?'—and my experience is not unique. It is the same for many people of my age group who came to Australia in that adolescent period. We hear the same with other communities as well. It takes a long time, it takes maturity, it takes education and it takes self-awareness—'This is who I am, warts and all'—to be able to say, 'Yes, it is ok. Today I am a bit more Australian,' or, 'Today I am a bit more Vietnamese, because I am in a particular setting'.³⁰

Inter-community relations

3.19 Participants to the inquiry spoke about the impact of racial discrimination and vilification on inter-community relationships. In the context of political discourse, inquiry participants considered an attack against one ethnic group as an attack on the principles of multiculturalism, sometimes causing culturally and linguistically diverse communities to self-impose isolation from the broader community.³¹ Mr Peter Wertheim from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry noted:

...if racism starts with other groups, whether it is with Aboriginal groups, Asian groups or anyone else, it does not end there. It never ends there...A systematic attack by any section of society on another is bound to undermine the social fabric in a way that will lead to further racist attacks – a signal of permission, if you like, for racist attacks again other groups.³²

3.20 The committee heard that racial hatred and discrimination also has an effect on the way different communities interact with each other. Witnesses pointed to an increasing 'mistrust' amongst community groups, and an appearance of 'intercommunity racism' that undermines social cohesion.³³ Community Centres SA described a series of cultural exchange visits between members of the Muslim community, and members of the Aboriginal community, where groups acknowledged that they had 'bought into' negative stereotypes about each other, resulting in inter-community fear and prejudice.³⁴

29 Ms Huong Truong, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 13.

30 Ms Viv Nguyen, President, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 15.

31 Kurdish Lobby Australia, *Submission 12*, [p. 1]. Also see: Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 32.

32 Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 32.

33 Mr Peter George Doukas, Chair, Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 28.

34 Community Centres SA, *Submission 6*, [pp. 4–5].

3.21 Conversely, residents of Bendigo in regional Victoria argued that racially fuelled incidents in their regional town caused members of the community that were once strangers to gather together and promote community cohesion with a united voice. Mrs Margot Spalding, Founder of the Believe in Bendigo movement revealed:

...I didn't know any Muslims in Bendigo at the time and didn't know, really, any of [the Bendigo Interfaith Council] sitting here, and now I know them really well. Long term, I believe, it is of great benefit to Bendigo. We would prefer that we didn't have to have these troubles in order to have this happen, but a lot of people know a lot more about other faiths and other communities within the community of Bendigo now as a result of this, because a whole lot of people got very upset and stood up and spoke loudly.³⁵

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

3.22 According to the Scanlon Foundation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians reported one of the highest levels of racial discrimination of all survey participants, at 59 per cent.³⁶ Throughout the inquiry, many witnesses and submitters acknowledged Indigenous Australians as the first custodians of Australian land, and the role they continue to play in contemporary multicultural society.³⁷ However, the committee heard that the 'original sin' of suppressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture parallels the discrimination experienced by new arrivals to Australia today.³⁸

3.23 Participants highlighted a number of high profile examples of discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to demonstrate the prevalence of racial exclusion and vilification against the Indigenous community. Witnesses noted the social media abuse of former senator and athlete Nova Peris – the first Aboriginal woman in federal politics.³⁹ Another example presented to the

35 Mrs Margot Spalding, Founder and Member of Steering Committee, Believe in Bendigo, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 27.

36 The Scanlon Foundation, *Australians Today: The Australia@2015 Scanlon Foundation Survey*, August 2016, p. 61.

37 Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

38 See, for example, Mr Peter George Doukas, Chair, Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 28; Mr Louis De Villiers, *Submission 76*, [p. 1]; Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 2.

39 Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 2. Also see: Author unknown, 'Nova Peris: NSW Central Coast chiropractor charged over online racist abuse', *ABC News*, 31 May 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-30/nova-peris-online-racist-abuse-nsw-chiropractor-charged/7460374> (accessed 16 August 2017).

committee was the treatment of footballer Adam Goodes during a number of Australian Rules Football games where he was subjected to booing from the crowd.⁴⁰

3.24 The Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission (NTADC) noted that in a 2011 research study undertaken by the Indigenous Legal Needs Project, 22.6 per cent of Indigenous men and women reported directly experiencing racism. This, NTADC told the committee, is only the tip of the iceberg:

In fact we are often told by Aboriginal Territorians that they do not bring complaints to the NTADC because discrimination is so common for them they would not know which complaint to bring, and would not have the time to complain every time they were discriminated against.⁴¹

3.25 Witnesses expressed concern that redress for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is yet to be seen. Many recommended buttressing recognition of Indigenous Australians as a fundamental step in strengthening multiculturalism and social inclusion in Australia.⁴²

Economic impacts

3.26 Many participants of the inquiry agreed that Australia's reputation as a successful multicultural country, with a strong program of settlement services, has contributed to its economic and social status.⁴³ As a nation, it attracts high volumes of skilled migrants, international students, tourists, and investment from overseas. According to the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, in 2012–13, overseas students contributed \$14.46 billion to the Australian economy, with Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria being the main beneficiaries.⁴⁴

3.27 Witnesses argued that the economic contribution of migrants is demonstrated by Australia's record period of unbroken economic growth. According to the Australian Multicultural Council, new migrants and refugees secure employment quickly, earn above average salaries, and pay taxes.⁴⁵ Mr Peter Doukas, Chair of the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales noted:

40 Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Submission 34*, p. 5. Also see: Andrew Wu, 'Sydney Swans midfielder Adam Goodes booed again in qualifying final against Fremantle Dockers', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/afl/sydney-swans/adam-goodes-booed-again-in-qualifying-final-against-fremantle-20150912-gj17hv.html> (accessed 16 August 2017).

41 Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission, *Submission 48*, p. 4.

42 See, for example, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 28; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 14; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 1; Mr Atem Dau Atem, Public Officer, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 42.

43 See, for example, Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, [p. 1]; Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, pp. 7–8; Multicultural Council of Tasmania, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

44 Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, p. 8.

45 Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

The real economics are that newly arrived people work harder and are happier to sacrifice their own lives in favour of their children and are happier to work harder and for longer hours than established people, and that has been the tradition of Australian immigration from the beginning.⁴⁶

3.28 Witnesses cautioned, however, that increasing incidents of discrimination have the potential to damage Australia's multicultural 'brand', and have negative economic and social consequences. The Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland cautioned:

On purely economic terms, Australia cannot afford to be perceived by its Asia-Pacific neighbours as being a racist country, and needs to pay close attention to its international image. Over the years there have been numerous challenges to the view that Australia is a country that values its diverse and multicultural society and is committed to the Asia-Pacific region.⁴⁷

3.29 Economic costs of racism can also be seen in the workplace. The Challenging Racism Project, conducted by Western Sydney University, stated that racism is associated with labour turn-over, absenteeism, and regulatory costs associated with complaints resolution.⁴⁸

3.30 Despite governments' strong focus on 'productive diversity'⁴⁹, the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) warned the committee that a disproportionate emphasis on the economic contributions of culturally and linguistically diverse communities undermines principles of equality. ECCQ further submitted:

These reductions can mean that acceptance is based on an individual's ability to contribute economically, at times above and beyond the average person, which incites inequality from the outset.⁵⁰

3.31 On an individual level, witnesses and submitters suggested that racial discrimination can also lead to significant economic disadvantage for those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The most prominent form of systemic disadvantage presented to the committee was that of labour market discrimination.

46 Mr Peter George Doukas, Chair, Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 29. Also see: Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, [p. 1]; Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Submission 16*, p. 2; Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

47 Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, p. 8. Also see: Ms Elizabeth Blades-Hamilton, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 39.

48 Challenging Racism Project, *Submission 22*, [p. 3].

49 Settlement Services International, *Submission 14*, p. 10.

50 Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, *Submission 24*, [p. 3].

Labour market discrimination and barriers to employment

3.32 Witnesses noted that the opportunity to work and contribute to the economy is a fundamental aspect of settlement and social contribution. However, the committee heard that many culturally and linguistically diverse individuals experience labour market discrimination, despite high levels of education and overseas working experience.⁵¹

3.33 According to RCOA, research demonstrates systemic discrimination against applicants from migrant and refugee backgrounds:

Racism and discrimination has been identified in research and consistently through RCOA's community consultations as a profound barrier to refugee and humanitarian entrants finding and sustaining employment.

This is evidenced by research such as that conducted by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury in Western Australia. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury's compelling study concluded that, despite similar levels of human capital (English proficiency and qualification level) and similar length of residence, the differing employment outcomes could only be explained due to structural and interpersonal racism.⁵²

3.34 Witnesses said that labour market discrimination is particularly acute for some ethnic groups. The Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies pointed to research demonstrating discrimination against Muslims:

One Australian report found significant labour market discrimination against Muslims, despite similar levels of education to the Australian average. It concluded that 'a significant proportion of Muslim Australians occupy a relatively marginal position in Australian society socially and economically...'⁵³

3.35 Volunteering SA&NT also noted that many individuals from Chinese, Middle-Eastern and Indian backgrounds experience discrimination simply based on the inclusion of their name on a job application:

...a Chinese-named applicant would need to put in 68 per cent more applications than an Anglo-named applicant to get the same number of calls back. A Middle Eastern-named applicant needed 64 per cent more and an indigenous-named applicant 35 per cent more.⁵⁴

3.36 Ms Huong Truong from the Victoria Chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia stated that the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities is lacking in upper management roles:

51 See, for example, Queensland Government, *Submission 98*, p.2; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 56*, p. 5; Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 15.

52 Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 14.

53 Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

54 Volunteering SA&NT, *Submission 27*, [p. 3] (capitalisation as per original submission).

...discrimination is really at a systematic level. If I look at my colleagues in the local government organisation that I work at, I see that diversity is fairly non-existent when you go beyond the level of managers, directors and CEOs. When we are talking to our local representatives or we are looking at question time, we are not seeing a lot of diversity in our political representatives either. So at that level I think there is still what I think is commonly referred to as a bamboo ceiling.⁵⁵

3.37 To improve employment outcomes for refugees and migrants, the Australian Multicultural Council recommended enacting legislation to broaden the mandate of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to apply to culturally and linguistically diverse individuals.⁵⁶ Other witnesses, however, cautioned against using targets to increase diversity in the workplace. For example, Ms Viv Nguyen, President of the Victoria Chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, commented:

From my experience as a head of diversity for a major financial institution, we hire people who look different but who behave exactly the same. So there is no diversity at all. Even though we look physically different, our ability to contribute to what is different and to what is diversity is non-existent.⁵⁷

Media representation

3.38 Media plays a crucial role in shaping the views and perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse Australians. According to data produced by Nielsen, OzTAM and Regional TAM, the average Australian watches approximately two hours and forty minutes of broadcast television per day.⁵⁸ Additionally, it is estimated that seven in ten Australians are active social media users, and 86 per cent of households access the internet.⁵⁹ The ECCQ stated:

Media is deeply embedded within the hierarchical power structures of society, and has the ability to not only represent dominant views and perspectives, but to also mutually reinforce prejudices and stereotypes within those views.⁶⁰

3.39 Many participants to the inquiry expressed concern that the media presents unfair and unfounded representations of culturally and linguistically diverse

55 Ms Huong Truong, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 15.

56 Australian Multicultural Council, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

57 Ms Viv Nguyen, President, Victoria Chapter, Vietnamese Community in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 15.

58 Miss Tessa Mills, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Screen Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 13.

59 Challenging Racism Project, *Submission 22*, [pp. 2–3]. Also see: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *8146.0 – Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2014-15*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8146.0> (accessed 16 August 2017).

60 Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, *Submission 24*, [p. 5].

communities. Media broadcasters were accused of failing to provide balanced reporting, instead employing negative and fear-inducing language and imagery for the purpose of boosting sales.⁶¹ The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland stated that the mainstream media appear 'disinterested in positive stories of social cohesion' and are unconcerned about presenting accurate representations of ethnic and migrant groups.⁶²

3.40 One such example brought to the committee's attention involved a recent headline about the results of the 2016 Australian Census. The headline drew attention to the increased number of Australians reporting affiliation with Islam:

The headline is 'Census 2016: Aussies losing their religion as Islam soars by 160 per cent'. And I thought, okay, Hinduism has increased by 533 per cent. Why don't we start with that, and go down? Hinduism has increased by 533 per cent, Buddhism by 200 per cent and Islam 160 per cent.⁶³

3.41 Dr Joshua Roose of the Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies observed that the media has fluctuated in its discourse around Islam, but are now unconsciously playing a role in fuelling social unrest:

Any time there is even a hint of an attack with Muslims involved it is broadcast without any nuanced understanding of who is driving it, where it is coming from and so on...Every time the so-called Islamic State—and I will refer to them as the Islamic State movement, because they are effectively only populist movement—gets negative media coverage, or any coverage at all, it is actually to their benefit. To fail to understand what they are attempting to do in terms of polarising the political discourse is to actually do the job for them. Every time they get negative media they do not really care. Publicity is the point. By getting that coverage up onto the front pages without any really nuanced interpretation or engagement with it, the media in some ways is unwittingly doing their job for them.⁶⁴

3.42 Australian Lawyers for Human Rights submitted that racial prejudice works through socialisation, communicating messages that create individuals' sense of what is normal and what is ordinary.⁶⁵ The committee therefore considers that mass media

61 Dr Joshua Mark Roose, Secretary, Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 14; Refugee Community Advocacy Network, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

62 Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, p. 8.

63 Mr Burhan Zangana, Committee Member, Refugee Communities Advocacy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 43.

64 Dr Joshua Mark Roose, Secretary, Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 14.

65 Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 15. Also see: Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 15; Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, *Submission 32*, p. 8; Victorian Government, *Submission 41*, p. 10; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 6.

holds significant power in determining the public discourse around multiculturalism and social inclusion in Australia.

Language and imagery

3.43 The committee heard that the choice of language used in the media has the potential to influence the way Australians view culturally and linguistically diverse communities, creating social bias that unfairly targets segments of society.⁶⁶ Founder of Media Diversity Australia, Ms Isabel Lo, presented an example of the way in which housing affordability issues have been disproportionately linked to foreign investors, particularly those of Chinese descent. She told the committee:

Now if we drill down and have a look at the numbers, Chinese foreign owners account for just one per cent of the entire market. That is not really what is causing sky-high prices; it is local investors. That kind of dominant voice, without the other side arguing for the alternative look, means there is a social impact. It trickles down to the average buyer. I am of a Chinese Australian background, and that kind of rhetoric has had an impact on me. When I turn up to a house auction, for example, I get the sense that there are a lot of negative views towards me. I walk in and they think: 'Oh, no; it's a foreign buyer. There's no way we're going to be able to afford this house now.' There is a very negative view of every Asian person who is looking to buy a house. It is feeding the hysteria of frustrated buyers...⁶⁷

3.44 Multicultural Youth South Australia told the committee that the reference to African refugees in media reports about the 'Apex' gang in Melbourne is a key source of settlement stress for young African migrants. Despite later clarification that the Apex gang was 'never predominantly African and instead is comprised mainly of Australians', media reports placed disproportionate emphasis on the ethnicity of a few of the gang's members, having a damaging effect on the African community:

Such political and media representations, and subsequent public discourse, significantly impacts the day to day lives of young African refugees. Many experience frequent street level racism including challenges from members of the public about their right to be in Australia.⁶⁸

3.45 Participants to the inquiry also highlighted the proliferation of language around 'boat people', 'terrorists' and 'queue jumpers'. They told the committee that such inflammatory language paints a picture of new arrivals as being illegal and undeserving of their place in Australia.⁶⁹ Australian Lawyers for Human Rights noted

66 See, for example, Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, *Submission 16*, p. 2; Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 11.

67 Ms Isabel Lo, Founder, Media Diversity Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 34.

68 Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

69 See, for example, Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales, *Submission 13*, p. 1; Multicultural Youth South Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 6; Ms Kaye Graves, Team Manager, Diversity, Bendigo Community Health Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 11.

that this language is de-humanising and can cause those described to feel excluded and marginalised.⁷⁰

3.46 Research by the Victorian Multicultural Commission into the effect of media representation on young people found that many young Victorians felt that negative media images fuelled stereotyping and racial profiling.⁷¹ Similar results were reported in the Western Sydney University's study into the attitudes and experiences of Australian Muslims, which revealed that 79 per cent of Muslims believe that the Australian media's portrayal of Muslims is unfair and 83 per cent believe this contributes to non-Muslims' views of Muslims.⁷²

Social media and cyber-racism

3.47 Witnesses and submitters expressed particular concern about the role of the internet, and specifically social media, in contributing to incidences of racial abuse, discrimination or vilification.⁷³ According to research by the Challenging Racism Project, the prevalence of cyber-racism has increased over recent years, manifesting primarily on Facebook, online news commentary and YouTube.⁷⁴

3.48 Professor Andrew Markus of Monash University stated:

The power of social media grows as the centre weakens—as our national broadcasting weakens and as our newspapers almost pale into insignificance, in the current context, relative to social media.⁷⁵

3.49 The committee was told that giving a voice to the public, in the form of social media and online communications, can serve to embolden minority voices that protest Australia's increasing diversity.⁷⁶ Mr Eddie Micallef, Chair of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, stated:

I think the media has played a role in—how shall I say this—giving the elements that mitigate against social cohesion a voice and an attitude is presented to many members of the community who are not well informed

70 Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Submission 23*, p. 21. Also see: Refugee Council of Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 13.

71 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Engaging Our Youth: Our Future*, December 2015, p. 89.

72 Western Sydney University, *The resilience and ordinariness of Australian Muslims: Attitudes and experiences of Muslims Report*, November 2015, p. 30. Also see: Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 11.

73 See, for example, Professor Andrew Jakubowicz and Ms Ly Ly Lim, *Submission 8*, p. 3; Challenging Racism Project, *Submission 22*, [p. 3].

74 Challenging Racism Project, *Submission 22*, [p. 3].

75 Professor Andrew Markus, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 19.

76 See, for example, Ms Ly Ly Lim, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 2; Professor Fethi Mansouri, Director, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation; and UNESCO Chair, Comparative Research in Cultural Diversity and Social Justice, Deakin University, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 49.

and it enhances some of the ignorance and bitterness that they host within themselves.⁷⁷

3.50 The committee held a public hearing in Bendigo to expressly examine incidents in Bendigo during 2014–15, including the use of social media in mobilising anti-mosque and anti-Islam protesters. The committee heard that social media has also led to a movement of tolerance and social harmony in the same area.

Mosque protests in Bendigo, Victoria

3.51 The City of Greater Bendigo is a large municipality in central Victoria with a population of over 110 000. It is becoming increasingly diverse, with seven per cent of residents born overseas, and two per cent of households speaking a language other than English at home. From 2011 to 2014, the city saw a 178 per cent rise in new Australian citizens.⁷⁸

3.52 In 2014–15, Bendigo received a large amount of media attention regarding a proposal to build a mosque for the approximately 300 Muslim residents in the town. The council approval decision was met with a series of appeals through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the Victorian Court of Appeal.⁷⁹

3.53 In August and October 2015, protests took place in the town centre, led by members of the Bendigo Action Coalition and the United Patriots Front. Anti-racism groups also held rallies in opposition to anti-Islam groups.⁸⁰ Participants in the inquiry pointed to the role of social media in amplifying community attention around the events. It was later revealed that many of the protestors were not locals, and had travelled from Sydney, Queensland and Adelaide to participate in demonstrations.⁸¹ A representative from Believe in Bendigo, a pro-diversity movement, observed that leaders of the anti-mosque movement used social media to advertise protest opportunities:

...[one of the leaders of the anti-mosque movement] doesn't organise things; she just puts it on her Facebook page. She will have organised the protest today at the mosque site. She just puts on her page that she's going

77 Mr Eddie Micallef, Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 19.

78 City of Greater Bendigo, *About Greater Bendigo*, <https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/About/About-Greater-Bendigo> (accessed 4 August 2017).

79 Author unknown, 'Bendigo mosque one step closer after latest appeal against proposal rejected', *ABC News*, 16 December 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-16/bendigo-mosque-given-all-clear-after-final-appeal-rejected/7032344> (accessed 4 August 2017).

80 Rebekah Cavanagh, 'Bendigo mosque: Anti-Islam and anti-racist protestor face off in counter rallies', *Herald Sun*, 29 August 2015, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/bendigo-mosque-antiislam-and-antiracist-protester-face-off-in-counter-rallies/news-story/e4591d0767c596b9b3242eed46aaa6b7> (accessed 5 August 2017).

81 Madeleine Morris, 'Bendigo's anti-mosque protest: United Patriots Front nationalist group behind demonstration', *ABC News*, 12 October 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-10-12/who-was-behind-bendigos-anti-mosque-protests/6848468> (accessed 5 August 2017).

to the Yellow Tie Dinner,⁸² wrapped in her flags and her signs...and people just come.⁸³

3.54 Ms Kate McInnes, Executive Officer at Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, reiterated the way social media was used to marginalise culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community:

...after 2014, when plans for the first mosque were approved, we saw an increase in incidences of interpersonal racism in Bendigo of our clients and our community members. This was towards visible migrants but particularly towards Muslim women who wear the hijab. We believe a combination of public discourse around the mosque, activity on social media and local protests led to this increase in racist incidences...⁸⁴

3.55 However, the committee heard that social media also assisted in galvanising support for multiculturalism, and was used as a tool to spread a message of peace and harmony to counter anti-mosque protests. Founder of Believe in Bendigo, Mrs Margot Spalding, told the committee:

We got Believe in Bendigo up very fast. We had to have somebody who was good at social media, because we have such a strong social media following...In that way we were able to get it up and going...Within 10 days, I think, we had 5½ thousand followers on Facebook, which was fantastic. People were actually joining Facebook, because it was the only way.⁸⁵

3.56 Years on from the mosque protests, witnesses and submitters described how social media continues to be used as a vehicle for promoting positive messages of social inclusion within and beyond Bendigo. Mr Abhishek Awasthi from the Bendigo Interfaith Council told the committee that the organisation's Facebook page is now used 'as a promotional tool and educational element where we spread out the information and share good, happy news stories'.⁸⁶ Believe in Bendigo also used social media to share a recently produced series of videos depicting community members from Karen, Muslim, Italian and Aboriginal descent, and the positive contribution they have made to the regional town. Mrs Spalding stated:

82 The 'Yellow Tie Dinner' was a dinner event on 15 July 2017 organised by Believe in Bendigo to celebrate Bendigo's growing diversity, and facilitate conversation between cultural groups.

83 Mrs Margot Spalding, Founder and Member of Steering Committee, Believe in Bendigo, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 29.

84 Ms Kate McInnes, Executive Officer, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 9.

85 Mrs Margot Spalding, Founder and Member of Steering Committee, Believe in Bendigo, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, pp. 28–29.

86 Mr Abhishek Awasthi, Non-Executive Director, Bendigo Interfaith Council, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 29.

We try to represent Bendigo very positively and we want Bendigo to be known as a very welcoming place for everybody to live and have a very happy life.⁸⁷

Free speech

3.57 One of the arguments often put forward in the debate about media commentary is that of free speech. Participants in the inquiry claimed that arguments for free speech are used to justify racially abusive commentary. The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education (ERC) adamantly noted:

Many of the people who criticise Section 18c as limiting 'free speech' were the loudest critics of an ANZAC Day social media post from Yassmin Abdel-Magied. It makes no sense that individuals...defend the right of people to make offensive comments about someone's 'race', colour or national or ethnic origin but call for Abdel-Magied to be sacked for writing an insensitive comment for which she later apologised. ERC believes that, in many instances, 'free speech' arguments are used to justify and normalise racist, discriminatory and culturally offensive statements and language.⁸⁸

3.58 The Australian Human Rights Commission submitted:

What is called 'free speech' is allowing hatred to have a voice, allowing the young and the weak of mind to be led to believe that it's OK to hate someone, to think they are less than you because of their race, the way they look or their beliefs.⁸⁹

3.59 The Australian Human Rights Commission acknowledged that free speech is a central tenet of democracy, however asserted that respectful discourse is not at odds with robust debate. They illustrated this by noting a previous study on the impact of hate speech laws:

One large-scale study on the impact of hate speech laws analysed 'letters to the editor' published in Australian newspapers over many years. It found that the public debate on matters of race and ethnicity had not abated over the 1990s and 2000s [when the Parliamentary Code of Race Ethics was introduced], though the manner in which issues were articulated became less prejudicial or discriminatory as time went on.⁹⁰

3.60 The committee considers that while the right to free speech is important, it should be inevitably superseded by basic human rights. Dr Tasmin Clarke from the Australian Lawyers for Human Rights put it plainly:

87 Mrs Margot Spalding, Founder and Member of Steering Committee, Believe in Bendigo, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 3 August 2017, p. 26.

88 Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, *Submission 26*, p. 13. Also see: Australian Hellenic Council, *Submission 53*, p. 6.

89 Name withheld, *Submission 92*, [pp. 1–2].

90 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 49*, pp. 11–12.

The media is required to be responsible and basically truthful, and individuals are required to exercise respect and civility in their public communications.⁹¹

Strengthening the narrative agenda

3.61 Participants of the inquiry called for greater intervention to address inflammatory discourse that undermines social cohesion. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry expressed frustration about the lack of leadership shown by online media sites in combating hate speech:

The fact that antisemitic comments are frequently allowed to remain online demonstrates the online media's tolerance for antisemitic comments, and/or a lack of knowledge, insight or capacity to identify antisemitism. The content of the comments reveals the extent of anti-Semitic hatreds that exist even in a relatively tolerant society like Australia.⁹²

3.62 The committee was told that broadcasters should be required to adopt a 'narrative agenda', that is, a framework for engaging with and speaking about culturally and linguistically diverse communities and individuals.⁹³ Participants also described this in terms of 'framing' media content in such a way that principles of social inclusion are upheld.⁹⁴ This could take the form of a voluntary code of conduct, whereby broadcasters are presented with a set of guidelines and given the option to opt in.⁹⁵

3.63 The notion of an independent watchdog to monitor and assess broadcasting content was touched upon throughout the inquiry. While some participants suggested strengthening the role of the Australian Press Council or issuing them legislative authority,⁹⁶ others focused more on the functions to be fulfilled:

We need a completely independent Ombudsman outside the ABC, appointed on a cross-partisan basis by parliament through a public selection process, to monitor public broadcasting, assess complaints about news, current affairs programs, documentaries and online standards and report regularly to the Australian people.⁹⁷

91 Dr Tamsin Clarke, Freedoms Committee Chair, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 49.

92 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 19.

93 Mr Eddie Micallef, Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, pp. 20–21.

94 Ms Ly Ly Lim, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 3.

95 Multicultural Communities Council of SA, *Submission 33*, [p. 3].

96 Mr Eddie Micallef, Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 21.

97 Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Submission 2*, p. 19.

Public broadcasters

3.64 Government funded broadcasters, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), are required to report in a balanced and impartial way, and are asked to 'reflect the nation to itself—including changes in migration, as well as geographic, demographic and socio-economic changes'.⁹⁸ Participants supported the role of public broadcasters in condemning racist commentary, and promoting positive examples of multiculturalism and culturally diverse communities in Australia.⁹⁹

3.65 Ms Mandi Wicks from SBS described the organisation's role in educating the community about core issues through providing background information to balance populist narratives.¹⁰⁰ This is evident in the production of SBS Radio's *Dear Homeland* program, which explored migrants' experiences of arriving in Australia and seeking a safer and better future. SBS explained:

The purpose of the programming was to bolster all Australians' understanding of different migration experiences by providing an insight into the lives of people settling in Australia. It featured new arrivals from Syria, Somalia, Iraq and Italy.¹⁰¹

3.66 Another example presented to the committee was the third season of *Go Back to Where You Came From*, which 'provoked national debate about how Australia seeks to responds [sic] to refugees and asylum seekers'. Witnesses said that these programs serve as 'myth-busting content', presenting viewers with a range of different perspectives and allowing them to form their own opinions.¹⁰²

3.67 The committee also noted the proactive role of broadcasters in developing and upholding media reporting standards. The SBS Charter makes specific mention of promoting understanding and acceptance of culturally, linguistically and ethnically

98 Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Submission 103*, p. 3. Also see: Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Submission 100*, p. 2.

99 See, for example, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, pp. 2–3; Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, *Submission 46*, p. 9; Chinese Community Council of Australia, *Submission 11*, p. 1.

100 Ms Mandi Wicks, Director, Audio and Language Content, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 19.

101 Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Submission 100*, p. 4.

102 See, for example, Ms Mandi Wicks, Director, Audio and Language Content, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 19; Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Submission 100*, p. 4.

diverse communities,¹⁰³ and the ABC's Charter requires that the ABC take into account the 'multicultural character of the Australian community'.¹⁰⁴

3.68 The ABC is also guided by its Editorial Policies which make specific reference to standards such as:

*7.7 Avoid the unjustified use of stereotypes or discriminatory content that could reasonably be interpreted as condoning or encouraging prejudice.*¹⁰⁵

3.69 The committee was told that public broadcasters are fundamental in supporting settlement outcomes and allowing new arrivals to feel welcomed in Australia. As the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia noted:

One of the most important functions performed by the SBS generally is its role in representing the views and interests of CALD communities and of new and emerging communities and of telling the stories of migrants. The value of this is broad. It encourages links between communities of origin and communities of settlement.¹⁰⁶

Training multicultural voices

3.70 Researchers from the Challenging Racism Project suggested that an effective solution to counter poor media coverage of minority groups is resourcing and training targeted groups to self-represent in public debates.¹⁰⁷ This was supported by the ECCQ who noted that training programs empower migrants and refugees to interact with the media, and provide opportunities for mainstream journalists to consider their point of view.¹⁰⁸

3.71 Ms Helen Kapalos of the Victorian Multicultural Commission noted that simple supports such as mentoring and public speaking training could greatly assist culturally and linguistically diverse individuals wanting to engage in public debate.¹⁰⁹

3.72 The distinct lack of multicultural voices in the media, and the perception of a predominantly Anglo-white voice in discussions around multiculturalism, is illustrated in Media Diversity Australia's comments about Yassmin Abdel-Magied's treatment:

103 Special Broadcasting Service, *SBS Charter*, <http://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/corporate/index/id/25/h/SBS-Charter> (accessed 16 August 2017). Also see: Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Submission 100*, p. 2.

104 Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Legislative framework*, <http://about.abc.net.au/how-the-abc-is-run/what-guides-us/legislative-framework/> (accessed 16 August 2017). Also see: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Submission 104*, p. 2.

105 Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Submission 103*, p. 3.

106 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission 57*, p. 2.

107 Challenging Racism Project, *Submission 22*, [p. 5]; Also see: Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Strengthening Social Cohesion: Meeting Community Need*, May 2016, p. 78.

108 Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, *Submission 24*, [pp. 5–6].

109 Ms Helen Kapalos, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 41.

Whether one agrees with her point of view or not, the fact that she's been given such an elevated position in the media in a rather short period of time, is because simply, there are very few people who are willing to hold such 'controversial' public views for fear of being castigated... The end result is a situation where Abdel-Magied is forced, by an absence of greater diversity, to represent an incredibly complex community, leading to stilted debate on the issues.¹¹⁰

Diversity in media content

3.73 According to Screen Australia's *Seeing Ourselves* report, minority groups are severely underrepresented in Australian television.¹¹¹ The report examined the prevalence of diversity in Australian TV drama and found that non-Anglo-Celtic Australians make up 32 per cent of the total population, but only 18 per cent of TV drama main characters and 24 per cent of actors playing those characters. Miss Tessa Mills of Screen Australia concluded that 'non-Anglo-Celtic characters were underrepresented by around 50 per cent'.¹¹²

3.74 Participants in the inquiry noted that on-screen diversity plays an important role in showcasing and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism. It shows individuals that they are part of society, and acknowledges their cultural identity as being part of the broader Australian population.¹¹³ Ms Ly Ly Lim stated:

People need to see faces on television that reflect their communities. Otherwise, the subliminal message is that those who they do not see do not matter, and if they do not matter they do not belong here in this country.¹¹⁴

3.75 Witnesses and submitters noted that cultural and ethnic representation in the media also broadens community expectations of diversity. Representatives from SBS referred to *The Family Law*, a program which features a principally Asian cast, and an Indigenous animation called *Little J & Big Cuz* which normalise diversity, and 'enable people from all backgrounds to see themselves reflected in modern media'.¹¹⁵ Ms Clare O'Neil from SBS stated:

...one of the great things about *The Family Law* program is that it really does tell universal family stories, not specific cultural stories...it is very

110 Media Diversity Australia, *Submission 64*, [p. 2]. Also see: Mr Eddie Micallef, Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 21.

111 Screen Australia, *Seeing ourselves: Reflections on diversity in Australian TV drama*, August 2016, p. 10.

112 Miss Tessa Mills, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 13.

113 Ms Clare O'Neil, Director, Corporate Affairs, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 17.

114 Ms Ly Ly Lim, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, pp. 2–3.

115 Ms Clare O'Neil, Director, Corporate Affairs, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 17. Also see: Miss Tessa Mills, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Screen Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 14.

relatable for people from a whole range of backgrounds. The fact that it is a cast with a principally Asian background is almost incidental for a lot of the storylines. It is about telling those stories in a way that is accessible to everybody.¹¹⁶

3.76 Some witnesses countered that Australia has a strong track record of promoting diversity on-screen. Programs made by Indigenous Australians, such as *First Australians*, *Redfern Now* and *Songlines on Screen*, serve to preserve the language and culture of Indigenous Australia and bring it to the broader Australian population.¹¹⁷ However, despite these positive examples, witnesses and submitters agreed that Australia needs to do more to promote diversity in Australian media content.

Barriers to participation

3.77 Witnesses from the media industry told the committee that systemic barriers to pursuing a career in the media have contributed to the lack of diverse representation. Media Diversity Australia noted that some aspects of the job demand culturally confronting circumstances that may preclude some members of the CALD community from participating:

...for the first two years of their cadetship they might be rotated through a variety of roles, but one of those roles was being sent out to a regional town to do reporting out in the country...For someone from a culturally diverse background—let's say a Muslim background—their family might not be as comfortable with them being sent out to a country town all by themselves. If this person is female and of a certain religious extraction, they might not feel comfortable going through some of the processes that a cadet has to go through. As a result, they might end up dropping out of the cadet program because they think, 'This is not for me; I don't feel comfortable being sent out as a young person on my own to this particular beat,' and they self-select out of that program, which is a huge pity. So there are some structural and institutional barriers. It is not just attitudes and unconscious bias that companies have to look at.¹¹⁸

3.78 Similarly, representatives from the Victorian Multicultural Commission stated that greater supports are required to ensure that hiring employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is not simply a 'tick the box' exercise, but instead demonstrates a genuine effort to diversify representation in the media.¹¹⁹

3.79 Other barriers to diverse media that were raised throughout the inquiry included the high cost of locally-produced programming. Witnesses from SBS noted

116 Ms Clare O'Neil, Director, Corporate Affairs, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 17.

117 Screen Australia, *Screen Currency: Valuing our screen industry*, November 2016, pp. 10–11.

118 Ms Isabel Lo, Founder, Media Diversity Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 35.

119 Ms Helen Kapalos, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2017, p. 42.

that 'Australian content is very expensive',¹²⁰ and may contain an element of commercial risk. As one-quarter of SBS funding is sourced from advertising and commercial sources, Ms O'Neil, an officer from SBS, revealed that this may influence broadcaster decisions about what programs they feature.¹²¹

3.80 Mr Patrick May, a policy analyst from Screen Australia, maintained that despite the commercial risk associated with diverse content, many public and commercial broadcasters are slowly beginning to feature more diverse programming:

Since then [2015] Channel 9, Channel 7 and Channel 10 have all had either focused diversity or incidental diversity through *The Secret Daughter*, through *The Wrong Girl* and through *Here Come the Habibs*. They are all working in this space in different ways.¹²²

3.81 Witnesses noted that the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse Australians in mainstream television can impact on opportunities and aspirations for future generations. As Miss Mills from Screen Australia stated, '[i]t is often said that you cannot be what you cannot see'.¹²³

Committee view

3.82 The committee recognises the impact of public and commercial media broadcasters in shaping public discourse about multiculturalism and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia. In the committee's opinion, the use of inflammatory language and imagery, and the conflation of broader social issues with multiculturalism, has damaged Australia's relationship with its multicultural identity.

3.83 The committee notes that the incidence of racial discrimination and vilification has also been influenced by the development of social media and information technology. This was particularly evident in the incidents surrounding the mosque building proposal in Bendigo, Victoria. The committee observed that in this case, social media played a significant role in mobilising various groups in their expression of opposition or support for the mosque.

3.84 Whilst the free speech debate was explicitly examined in the recent Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into freedom of speech in Australia,¹²⁴ the committee believes that all media platforms, including social media, should adhere to principles of social cohesion and non-prejudice. The committee

120 Ms Clare O'Neil, Director, Corporate Affairs, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, pp. 15–16.

121 See, for example, Miss Tessa Mills, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Screen Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 18; Ms Clare O'Neil, Director, Corporate Affairs, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 18.

122 Mr Patrick May, Policy Analyst, Screen Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 18.

123 Miss Tessa Mills, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Screen Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2017, p. 14.

124 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Freedom of speech in Australia: Inquiry into the operation of Part IIA of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) and related procedures under the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*, February 2017, pp. 1–112.

commends the existing SBS Charter and the ABC Charter in endeavouring to promote and reflect Australia's diversity, and sees a need to extend these guiding principles to other broadcast media.

Recommendation 4

3.85 The committee recommends that the Australian Press Council develop a broadcast media Code of Conduct, requiring commercial broadcasters to report in such a way that raises awareness of Australia's diversity and prohibits misrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

3.86 The committee contends that the evidence presented throughout the inquiry demonstrates a lack of diversity in on-screen media content, which is in part due to systemic barriers to participation by, and representation of, culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

3.87 The committee acknowledges the current initiative being developed by the ABC in partnership with the Victorian Multicultural Commission, offering three paid internships to young journalists from culturally diverse backgrounds. The committee applauds the ABC's recently announced National Indigenous Affairs Coverage team, and recommends that all media broadcasters seek to improve pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and communities to participate in broadcast media.

Recommendation 5

3.88 The committee recommends the introduction of cadetships for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals amongst all public broadcasters and recommends that all media broadcasters seek to improve pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and communities to participate in broadcast media.