

Secretary Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Dear Sir

I wish to make the following submission on the above subject:

History.

The policy of multiculturalism was introduced by immigration minister Al Grassby during the Whitlam government . It was developed a bit more by Malcolm Fraser and then further developed by Bob Hawke and Paul Keating..

In 1988, during the Hawke government, former ambassador to China Stephen FitzGerald wrote a landmark report on immigration and multiculturalism. He concluded that the policies behind Australian immigration were broadly sound but the program needed a much stronger emphasis on skilled migration and the economic contribution migrants could make to Australia.

He also essentially said, though in different words, that the term multiculturalism was useless and confusing, but the policies pursued under its heading, such as teaching migrants English and welcoming their contribution and so on, were good policies.

Hawke and Keating nonetheless stuck with the term. It was hotly contested and highly divisive.

It's very unclear that the term made any positive contribution to the happy settlement of migrants. In the 1990s and beyond, Australia moved away from multiculturalism. A key moment came when then NSW premier Bob Carr abolished the NSW ethnic affairs commission. He felt the constant repetition of ethnic this and ethnic that was not productive and he didn't think migrants needed a special bureaucracy to watch over them.

Definition.

What does multicultural mean? Does it mean a nation fragmented into different and sometimes competing and opposed and sometimes divisive cultures? In other words a nation of tribes.

Is it leading to a form of ghettoisation?

Solution

Community relations is a more inclusive term than ethnic. It includes everybody, not just migrants.

Therefore multicultural policy should be abandoned and replaced by a policy of community relations. A policy of assimilation and integration.

Yours faithfully