

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM

DR SEV OZDOWSKI AM

Director, Equity and Diversity, Western Sydney University and Adjunct Professor,
Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney

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Australia's multiculturalism – success or not?

Immigration and Multiculturalism

The post-WWII migration to Australia delivered cultural diversity which became one of this country's most defining contemporary characteristics. Immigration also required a government response in terms societal organisation to integrate the migrants. Australian multiculturalism delivered such response. It aims at integration with a human face and through it, social cohesion. Multiculturalism, however, is not a policy that dictates the shape of on-going immigration intake, although some Australians argue for increased migration in order to increase diversity. (Australian Institute for Progress, 2015;8)

Initially, assimilation of non-British migrants and continuation of a mono-cultural 'Australian way of life' was the ideal to be followed. The expectation of the post-WWII immigration policy was that these non-British European migrants would, in short time, meld seamlessly into Australian society and adopt the Australian lifestyle as fast as possible; become local patriots and abandon their past national allegiances and cultural '*baggage*'. 'New Australians' had to speak English, not live in cultural ghettos and wherever possible marry into the Australian-born community.¹

However, upon their arrival, non-British migrants did not dissolve easily into the Anglo-Celtic melting pot, but established their own lively communities with churches, sporting, youth and cultural clubs, associations, language schools, welfare and financial institutions. They established these to maintain their culture and to help themselves in the process of settlement as there was no welfare state to look after their needs. 'New Australians' also developed effective community leaderships and ethnic media.

The process of moving away from the policy of assimilation towards multiculturalism gained momentum in the late sixties. With the increasing number of non-British settlers arriving, their concentration in certain localities and their growing wealth and political influence, the so-called ethnic vote started to make difference. This clearly points to a political dimension of the origin of current multicultural policies. In addition, the policy of assimilation started losing the high moral ground and public support including amongst the Anglo-Celtic majority. The ideals of

¹ In fact, the first Immigration Minister Calwell was the key proponent for the post WWII migration boom, was also a vigorous defender of the White Australia policy. His views reflected the views of the Australian public at the time. It was generally believed that it might take a generation but a conscious policy of assimilation would see a cohesive mono-culture '*without self-perpetuating enclaves and undigested minorities.*' (Lynch, 1971).

racial equality were gaining acceptance as social integration of migrants progressed. A culinary revolution and a high rate of intermarriage also played a role in this process.

By the early seventies it had become obvious that cultures brought to Australia by migrants were not going to fade away and that the nation would be better served by accepting diversity rather than trying to eradicate it.

Since then the successive national governments have created architecture, policies and programs to acknowledge and support cultural diversity, although Australia did not legislate along the lines of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1985.

For example, all post-1975 governments issued major policy statements defining and endorsing multiculturalism. The themes of multiculturalism were embedded in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* under which “*Australian citizenship is a common bond, involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians, while respecting their diversity.*” and in the anti-discrimination legislation – especially in the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. The Australian Human Rights Commission has statutory responsibilities to investigate and conciliate complaints of alleged racial and other discrimination and human rights breaches lodged under these laws. Australia is also a party to the seven key human rights treaties and submits periodic reports on measures taken to implement these.²

In addition, some states, for example New South Wales,³ Victoria and South Australia have specific multicultural legislation in place. Western Australia enacted a *Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act* in 1983; however this was repealed in 2006. A *Multicultural Recognition Bill* was recently adopted by the Queensland Parliament.

Definition

There is no agreed definition of ‘multiculturalism’. Taken literally, multi-culture means simply many cultures. Looking at how the word ‘multiculturalism’ is used one must conclude that multiculturalism means different things to different people.

Below I distinguish four different meanings that are most commonly given to the word ‘*multiculturalism*’.

First, multiculturalism could be defined as a normative ideal of how a diverse society should be organised to handle its cultural and religious diversity.

² The treaties include: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; The Convention on The Rights of The Child; The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; And The Convention against Torture.

³ Taking as an example the NSW *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*, it establishes six principles of multiculturalism as the policy of the state and creates the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW to fulfil a range of functions, including to support multicultural communities; advise government on multicultural affairs issues; and report annually on community relations and the effectiveness of government agencies in observing the principles of multiculturalism. To support the Commission’s work, the Act also provides for the establishment of Regional Advisory Councils covering all regional areas of the state.

Australia has adopted an inclusive model of multiculturalism where migrants can belong to Australia while keeping their original culture and traditions. Migrants and their cultural heritage are welcomed and accepted and their economic and civic contributions are cherished. Australia's 'fair go' culture is the backbone of such an ideal.

There is however less clarity as to the place of an existing Australian culture.

The majority view is that Australian multiculturalism has, at its core, some common elements of the established culture such as; the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, civil liberties and freedoms, equality of sexes and English as a national language. The non-dominant cultures are seen as contributors and not as pollutants.

A minority view would argue that the ideal of multiculturalism implies that all cultures are equal as the prefix 'multi' implies many equal parts. It would follow that all cultural beliefs and activities have equal standing and must be at least tolerated and preferably respected. For example, if a culture requires women's status in the society to be different to that of men, this should be respected by the authorities and the broader society and on occasions it should be able to override the egalitarian provisions of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.

This notion represents a relativist view of culture where a range of different standards could co-exist on equal footing, for example, Sharia law could coexist with Australian laws. Opponents of multiculturalism focus their criticism on this definition of multiculturalism seeing it as synonymous to tribalism and likely to undermine social cohesion. The relativist interpretation of multiculturalism, however, has never won any official endorsement in Australia.

There is also a problem with ending of the word with *-ism*. Words like fascism, communism, atheism, etc. tend to indicate an ideological focus.

Second, the word multiculturalism is simply used as a demographic descriptor of a diverse population. This is the most common use of the word. For example, Germany, France, Peru, India or Malaysia are often described as multicultural societies, meaning that they include multiple national identities, cultures and religions living next to each other.

Sometimes the usage of the word as a demographic descriptor is limited to only indicate the presence of minorities and does not refer to the whole of society concept. For example, many European leaders, when criticising the term multiculturalism, often refer only to the settlement problems associated with the current wave of refugees or the issue of integration of Muslims into Western societies.

Third, multiculturalism could be understood as a set of government policies and programs developed in response to and to manage cultural diversity. For example, many multicultural - in the demographic sense - countries may have some legal, policy and program responses to such diversity. These may include a range of measures aiming at social integration such as anti-discrimination laws, welfare, language training for new migrants and/or measures to combat radicalisation of Muslim youth. However, the word multiculturalism is unlikely to be used in the

context of punitive measures directed, for example, against Jews in the Third Reich or recently against non-Han minorities in China, and in particular against Tibetans and the Uyghurs people.

Fourth, multiculturalism is understood as a social compact or agreement about how to arrange social, political and economic relationships between different cultural strata. In modern societies like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA such compacts are founded on the principle of equality of status and opportunity and involve the sharing of power and wealth between different ethno-cultural groups. Social compacts are organised around a complex set of agreed national values and goals, normative and structural systems as well as policy, budgetary and program responses put in place to manage diversity.

Demographic diversity

Today, Australia is clearly a multicultural society in the descriptive use of this word. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Australian Census, over a quarter (26% or 5.3 million) of Australia's population was born overseas and a further one fifth (20% or 4.1 million) had at least one overseas-born parent. According to Anthea Hancocks this means that Australia has now '*... the largest overseas-born population of all large OECD nations ...*' (Scanlon Foundation, 2016;2)

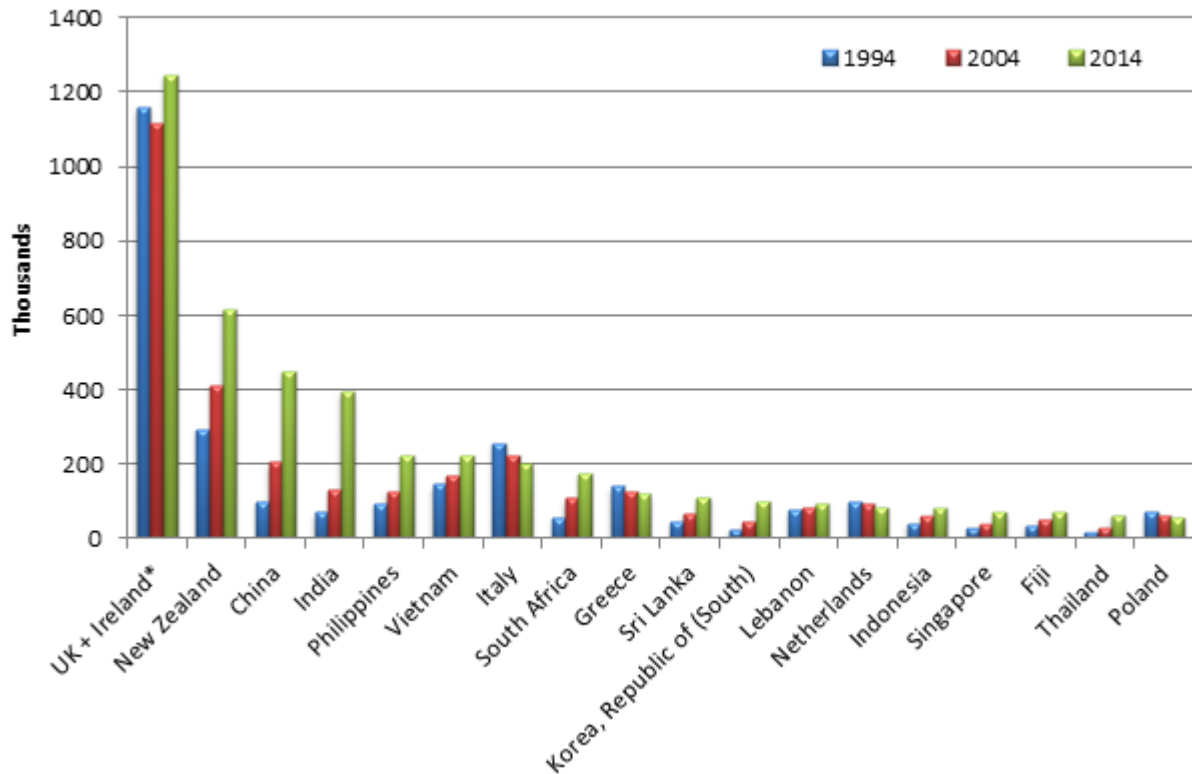
Although historically, the majority of migration came from Europe, there are increasingly more Australians who were born in Asia and other parts of the world. Renewed prosperity in Europe has meant that, where once Italians and Greeks made up the majority of non-British new arrivals, in 2010–11 China surpassed the UK as Australia's primary source of permanent migrants. Since then, China and India have continued to provide the highest number of permanent migrants.⁴ Between June 1996 and June 2013, Australia's overseas-born population grew by 51.2 per cent to 6.4 million people and included 427,590 born in China and 369,680 in India. The change in the ethnic composition of migrant intake is likely to continue in the foreseeable future under the Australian non-discriminatory immigration policies.

Conflicts overseas have also meant that Australia is now taking refugees from countries previously unrepresented, for example from Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Iraq and Sri Lanka. This adds to Australia's diversity.

When we look at cultural heritage, over 300 ancestries were separately identified in the 2011 Census. The most commonly reported were English (36%) and Australian (35%). A further six of the leading ten ancestries reflected the European heritage in Australia with the two remaining ancestries being Chinese (4%) and Indian (2%).

⁴ New Zealand citizens continue to feature highly in the number of settler arrivals, but they are not counted under Australia's Migration Program unless they apply for (and are granted) a permanent visa.

Estimated Resident Population by Country of Birth



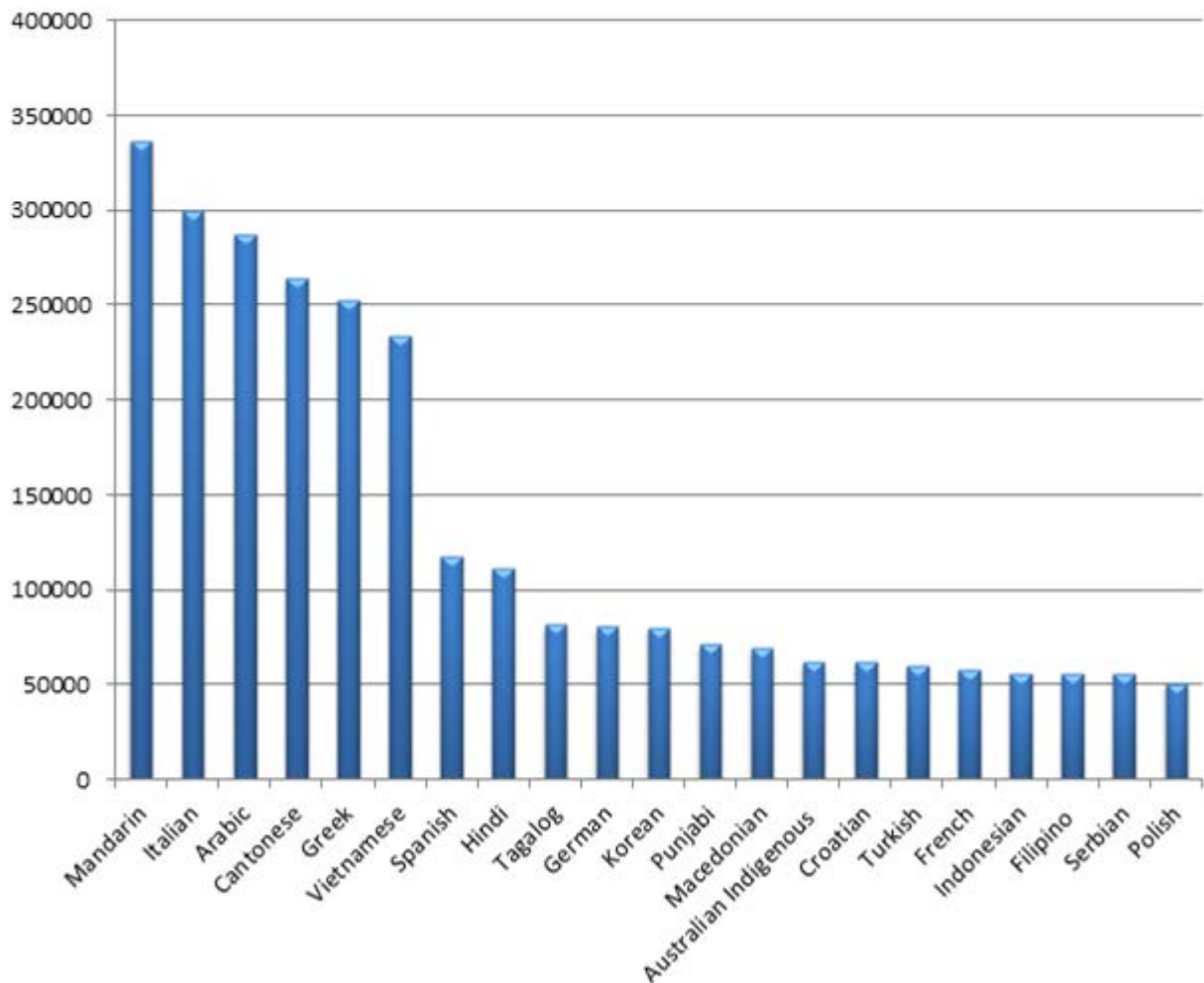
* Data used for UK + Ireland is from 1996

Source: Stat.abs.gov.au. "Estimated Resident Population By Country Of Birth - 1992 To 2014". 2016. Web. 8 Feb. 2016. <http://stat.abs.gov.au//Index.aspx?QueryId=743>

Today Australians speak more than 200 languages – this includes some 40 Aboriginal languages. Apart from English, the most commonly used are Chinese (largely Mandarin and Cantonese), Italian, Greek, Arabic, Indian (Hindi and Punjabi) and Vietnamese languages.

The 2011 Census indicated that usage of non-English languages is not equally distributed across Australia. For example, nearly 40 per cent of the Sydney population speak a non-English language at home. Arabic, which dominates the western suburbs, is the most widely spoken non-English language, with Mandarin and Cantonese the next most common second languages. In the Western Sydney suburb Cabramatta West, 40% of residents speak Vietnamese, in Old Guildford 47% speak Arabic, and in Hurstville 50% speak either Cantonese or Mandarin. In contrast, English language usage dominates regional Queensland and Western Australia.

Language Spoken at Home (other than English)



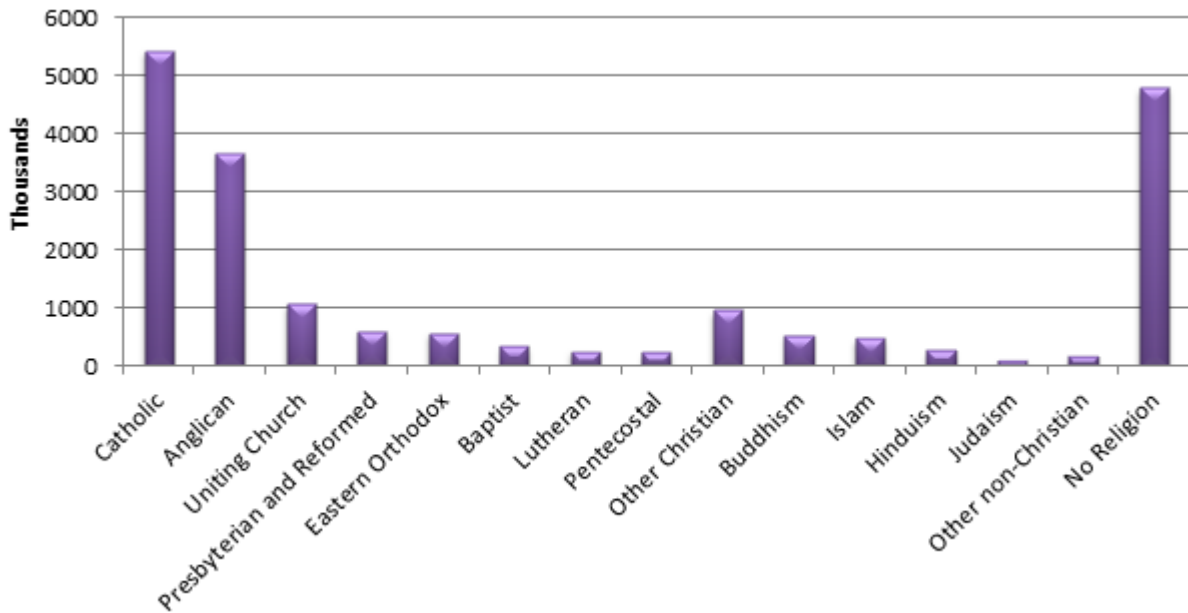
Source: Stat.abs.gov.au, "B13 Language Spoken At Home by Sex". 2016. Web. 8 Feb. 2016.
http://stat.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_CENSUS2011_B13#

There is also enormous religious diversity with some 61 % reporting an affiliation to Christianity in the 2011 Census, 7.2% reporting an affiliation to non-Christian religions, and 22% reporting 'No Religion'. The most common non-Christian religions in 2011 were Buddhism (accounting for 2.5% of the population), Islam (2.2%) and Hinduism (1.3%), although these proportions may have changed by 2016. Of these, Hinduism had experienced the fastest growth since 2001, increasing by 189% to 275,500, followed by Islam (increased by 69% to 476,300) and Buddhism (increased by 48% to 529,000 people).⁵

Despite that, Australia is a secular state and that some 22 percent of Australians reported no religious affiliation religious identity plays a key part in the life of some communities.

⁵ For in-depth analysis of Australia's religious diversity see: Bouma and Hughes, 2014

Religious Diversity



Graph created using data provided in Abs.gov.au,, "2071.0 - Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013". 2016. Web. 8 Feb. 2016.
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2071.0Main%20Features902012%E2%80%932013>

Evolution of policies and programs

Looking back, the policy of multiculturalism was built cumulatively by the post-1972 governments often in the context of political contest to secure electoral advantage. In the words of Elsa Koleth (2010) "*Multiculturalism has served a variety of goals over the years, including, the pursuit of social justice, the recognition of identities and appreciation of diversity, the integration of migrants, nation building, and attempts to achieve and maintain social cohesion.*" Although there were some important differences between multicultural policies of different governments over the years, by now all major political parties have accepted the core elements of multicultural policy.

Let us examine briefly how Australian multiculturalism has developed since the mid-seventies.⁶

- **Early Multiculturalism – Whitlam’s Labor Government (1972-1975)**

On 5 December 1972 Australia elected Whitlam’s Labor government, the first Labor government in more than two decades, which set out to change Australia through a wide-ranging reform program. Whitlam’s Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby discovered the term ‘*multi-cultural*’ on a trip to Canada⁷ in 1973 and brought it back to Australia.

⁶ A more complete history of Australian multiculturalism could be found in Ozdowski, S. (2013a).

⁷ A 1963 Royal Commission Report attempted to preserve Canada’s status as bilingual and bicultural society but it was neither popular nor correct as by the 1980s almost 40 percent of the population were of neither British nor French origins. The Report was attacked by both English and French speaking nationalists, but most vociferously by the so-called ‘*Third Force*’ Canada’s

Although Grassby never proposed a precise definition of multiculturalism, his speeches suggest that for him multiculturalism was a rather vague combination of different ideas, concepts and policies associated with equality, cultural identity and social cohesion in application to non-British migrant settlement. His concept of '*the family of the nation*' (Grassby, 1973) came close to being the first official definition of multiculturalism: "*In a family the overall attachment to the common good need not impose sameness on the outlook or activity of each member, nor need these members deny their individuality and distinctiveness in order to seek a superficial and unnatural conformity. The important thing is that all are committed to the good of all.*"⁸

The Whitlam government's key achievement was to outlaw racial discrimination and to remove the discriminatory provisions from the immigration legislation. *The Racial Discrimination Act* was enacted in 1975 to implement Australia's obligations under the newly ratified UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and an office of Commissioner for Community Relations was established.

- **Ethno-specific services – Fraser Coalition Government (1975-1983)**

When Malcolm Fraser's conservative coalition government came to power in late 1975 it adopted the Labor foundations and significantly extended Australian multiculturalism both as a concept and as a practical government response to cultural diversity.

A major initiative under the Fraser Government was the 1977-78 Review of Migrant Programs and Services. The resulting 1978 Report provided '*Guiding principles*' of multiculturalism to guide development of Australia as '*a cohesive, united and multicultural nation*'. (Galbally, 1978)

With this, for the first time, multiculturalism emerged as a well-articulated concept and government endorsed policy. It was an ideal of a society based on the principles of social cohesion, equality of opportunity and cultural identity. The Report declared that all Australians have the right to maintain their culture without fear of prejudice, as the Fraser government firmly believed that Australia's culture is enriched by the maintenance of diversity and Fraser linked his political success with the advancement of multicultural policies.

The Review also identified a range of ethno specific services and programs needed to ensure that non-British migrants had equal opportunity of access to government funded programs and services. It recommended the creation of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA), the Multicultural Education Program, the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, Migrant Resource Centres and the extension of existing services such as the Grant-in-Aid scheme, the Adult Migrant Education Program and the Bilingual Information Officer program.

other minority population, who advocated for 'multiculturalism'. (Marger, 2008) Faced with the very real possibility of their nation being torn apart the formula was changed from 'bilingualism and biculturalism' to 'bilingualism and multiculturalism'. (Knopff & Flanagan, 1989;131)

⁸ However, Mark Lopez (2000) argued that multiculturalism had a precarious status as an official policy under Whitlam because Grassby had not attempted to change the Labor party's immigration policy, and the policy direction outlined in his speech was not officially confirmed by the Whitlam Government.

The above recommendations were implemented by the Fraser government and paid for by the revenue resulting from the removal of tax deductibility for money sent by migrants to support families overseas. In addition, in 1981, the Fraser government created the first federal Human Rights Commission to domestically implement the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁹

Perhaps SBS, a government sponsored radio and television service with the principal function 'to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society' (SBS charter) has been a standout and long-term success of the Fraser reforms.

Fraser also created a number of advisory and consultative bodies including the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, the Australian Population and Immigration Council and the Australian Refugee Advisory Council. These councils were merged in May 1981 to form the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs Council (under the chairmanship of Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki). Ethnic communities and their leaders gained access to government and were regularly consulted on issues of relevance to them.

- **Defining multiculturalism under Hawke/Keating (1983-1996)**

Labor was returned to government under the leadership of Bob Hawke in 1983 and initially started to dismantle some of the multicultural institutions and programs created by the Fraser government. First, a review of AIMA was commissioned 1983 that resulted in a closure of the Institute in 1986. Then a merger between SBS and ABC broadcasters was proposed, that would effectively disband SBS. Public protests followed and forced the government to change its approach.

In December 1985 a Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services (ROMAMPAS) was created under the chairmanship of Dr James Jupp to advise on the Federal Government's role in assisting migrants to achieve their equitable participation in Australian society. The Committee reported in August 1986 and proposed to move away from an ethno specific service delivery model to provision of services, where possible, by government mainstream service providers under the new policy of 'Access and Equity Strategy'.¹⁰

Another key outcome of the Report was the establishment of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and of an advisory body the Australian Council of Multicultural Affairs. (ROMAMPAS, 1986) In addition, in 1989 the government established the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (to fill the vacuum created by closure of AIMA).

⁹ Of particular importance was ICCPR Article 27, which states: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their religion, or to use their own language."

¹⁰ For more about the A&E concept see: *Access and Equity Evaluation Report*. (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 1992) and *Cross-Portfolio Evaluation* (Ozdowski, 1992).

The establishment of OMA, as a central coordinating agency for multicultural policy and programs created a 'golden era' in Australian multiculturalism and ensured that the years of Hawke/Keating governments were characterised by the expansion of multicultural narrative and linking it to the mainstream. Throughout the Australian Bicentenary in 1988 and afterwards, constant efforts were made to link multiculturalism to Australian values. Strong efforts were made to *'place multiculturalism within a national narrative where cultural diversity and tolerance were part of Australian national identity'*. (Koleth, 2010-11;3-41)

Perhaps the biggest achievement of the Hawke government was the creation in 1989 of *'National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. Sharing Our Future'*. The Agenda further advanced the concept of multiculturalism by defining its limits. It said that effective multiculturalism requires an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, an acceptance of the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and the equality of the sexes. It also stated that the right to express your own culture carried the responsibility to afford others the same right to express theirs. In addition to the social justice and cultural identity aspects, a third tier of economic efficiency was also added. (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997)

Hawke's era was also characterised by the enhancement of consultations with ethnic communities and by the establishment of strong links between ethnic leadership and the Commonwealth and State Labor governments. Teaching of non-English languages was enhanced (Lo Bianco, 1987) and interpreting and translating services re-engineered.

When Paul Keating replaced Bob Hawke as Prime Minister at the end of 1991 he continued in this vein. Keating described multiculturalism as *"a policy which guarantees rights and imposes responsibilities."* *"The essential balance, I think, in the multicultural equation: the promotion of individual and collective cultural rights and expression on the one hand, and on the other the promotion of common national interests and values. And success depends on demonstrating that each side of the equation serves the other."* (Keating, 2002) Keating continued to stress that multiculturalism imposes responsibilities: *"These are that the first loyalty of all Australians must be to Australia, that they must accept the basic principles of Australian society. These include the Constitution and the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as a national language, equality of the sexes and tolerance."*

The high profile of multiculturalism under Hawke/Keating governments brought about populist backlash and questioning if the multicultural society was indeed desirable for Australia. At the same time the most recently arrived humanitarian settlers from Vietnam and Lebanon were experiencing significant settlement problems. In this context, the government created an ad-hoc 1988 Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, chaired by Dr Stephen FitzGerald, which in its report warned of a *'clear and present need for immigration reform'* and found that as the philosophy of multiculturalism was not widely understood, the *'ensuing uninformed debate'* was *'damaging the cause it seeks to serve'*. (FitzGerald, 1988)

- **Focus on citizenship under John Howard Government (1996-2007)**

In 1996 the Coalition leader John Howard was swept into power with a significant majority. Also in 1996 election, a former Liberal Party endorsed candidate, Pauline Hanson, was elected

on an anti-multiculturalism platform. In her maiden speech to parliament Hanson said *“I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians.”* (Hanson, 1996)

John Howard had been a critic of multiculturalism in opposition. He had advocated instead the idea of a *‘shared national identity’*, grounded in concepts of *‘mateship’* and a *‘fair go’*. So there was no surprise when soon after the election, Howard dropped the multicultural portfolio by closing down the Office of Multicultural Affairs and transferring the responsibility for multicultural issues to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. He also closed the BIMPR, restricted access to the Adult Migrant Education Program to new migrants and reduced funding and consultation of ethnic organisations.

Howard was also initially reluctant to criticize Hansen, claiming free speech as her right. However after she formed the One Nation Party, which split the conservative and blue-collar vote, and her tirades began to affect international relations Howard acted. In December of 1996, just 2 months after Hansen’s maiden speech Howard said: *“that there is no place in the Australia that we love for any semblance of racial or ethnic intolerance. There is no place within our community for those who would traffic, for whatever purpose and whatever goal, in the business of trying to cause division based on a person’s religion, a person’s place of birth, the colour of the person’s skin, the person’s values, ethnic make-up or beliefs”.* (Howard, 1996)

Then, in December 1999 the government launched a new policy statement called *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999). with added focus on citizenship and created a new Council for Multicultural Australia (CMA) supported by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, to promote community harmony through the Living in Harmony grants and promotion of Harmony Day. Multiculturalism, although in a slightly redefined form and focus, had returned to public life.

The government also took measures to advance the value of Australian citizenship.¹¹ Now those applying for citizenship need to undertake an Australian history and culture test in English and pledge: *‘loyalty to Australia and its people ... whose democratic beliefs I share ... whose rights and liberties I respect ... and whose laws I will uphold and obey.’* (Border.gov.au 2016). He also introduced expanded dual-citizenship rights.

Surprisingly, the terrorist attack in New York on 11 September 2001 gave Australian multiculturalism an additional lease of life. In 2003 the government issued a new policy statement *‘Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity: Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic Directions for 2003-2006’* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). This further shifted the focus of multiculturalism to unity and social cohesion. It also meant the return to old practices of community consultation and of opening government access to community leaders. In 2005 a Muslim Community Reference Group was created to advance Muslim integration with the rest of the community.

¹¹ This policy shift was reflected in the name change from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to Department of Immigration and Citizenship January 2007.

- **Equality and justice under Rudd/Gillard governments (2007-13)**

The Labor government was returned in 2007 with Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister. Upon election, Labor did not return to its past policies of active support for multiculturalism. The electoral platform promise to re-establish OMA in PM&C was not implemented after the election. Then, in the 2010 election, for the first time since the Whitlam government in 1972, Labor did not put forward a multicultural policy proposal.

After the change in Prime Ministership, Julia Gillard showed much more interest in multiculturalism. Post the 2010 election, her Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen, announced the restoration of the multicultural portfolio. In an address entitled: *The Genius of Multiculturalism* (Bowen, 2011) to the Sydney Institute, Bowen expressed the view that *"If Australia is to be free and equal, than it will be multicultural. But, if it is to be multicultural, Australia must remain free and equal."* Soon after the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) was officially launched by the Prime Minister¹² and an updated version of Australia's Multicultural Policy was published with a focus on equality and anti-discrimination.

Prime Minister Gillard also reaffirmed the well-established concepts that multiculturalism is: *"... the meeting place of rights and responsibilities where the right to maintain one's customs, language and religion is balanced by an equal responsibility to learn English, find work, respect our culture and heritage, and accept women as full equals. .../ "Where there is non-negotiable respect for our foundational values of democracy and the rule of law, and any differences we hold are expressed peacefully. /.../ "Where old hatreds are left behind, and we find shared identity on the common ground of mateship and the Aussie spirit of a fair go".* (Australianpolitics.com, 2012)

- **Stress on social cohesion under Abbott/Turnbull government (2013-)**

The returned Coalition Prime Minister Abbot reappointed the Australian Multicultural Council and strengthened focus on social cohesion and productive diversity. In addition, a range of new measures were put in place to communicate better with Muslim community leadership and especially to stop the radicalization of Muslim youth.

Tony Abbott was replaced by Malcolm Turnbull as Prime Minister in September 2015. In February 2016 a leaked government document indicated that the Turnbull government may consider toughening Australia's humanitarian resettlement program, including increasing the screening and monitoring of refugees and making it harder to obtain permanent residency and citizenship. The document claimed that the changes may be introduced because *'it has been established that there are links between recent onshore terrorist attacks and the humanitarian intake'*. It also singled out the Lebanese community as the *'most prominent ethnic group amongst Australian Sunni extremists'*. The leak drew a swift reaction from ethnic communities and the Labor opposition, alleging elements of the paper were *'verging on bigotry and racism'*. (Hurst, 2016). This was followed by a conciliatory meeting with Muslim leaders in Melbourne in March 2016.

¹² AMC was launched on 22 August 2011 at Parliament House in Canberra.

Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Dutton responded by reassuring Australians that *'As far as future policies are concerned I can assure you that in terms of people's rights there is only one class of citizens in Australia. All citizens have the same rights but they also have the same obligations and one of those obligations is obviously to obey the law. That applies whether you were born here or whether you took out your citizenship last week.'* (Hurst, 2016).

However, until now no new multicultural policy statement has been issued by Abbott/Turnbull government.

Multiculturalism - success or otherwise

The vast majority of Australians regard both Australia's immigration outcomes¹³ and its multicultural policy as a success. Let us start with results of public opinion research and then examine a number of other social indicators.

- **Public support**

The Scanlon Surveys have shown a strong support for the policy of multiculturalism dating back to 2013 (3 surveys) and some other surveys have indicated similar support in earlier years. The 2015 Scanlon Survey found that 86 per cent of respondents agree that *'multiculturalism has been good for Australia'* (Markus, 2015); 75 percent that *'multiculturalism contributes to our economic development'*; 71 percent that *'multiculturalism encourages migrants to integrate'*; and 60 per cent believe that *'diversity strengthens the Australian way of life'*. (Scanlon Foundation, 2013). The Scanlon Foundation findings are supported by the results of the Western Sydney University led *Challenging Racism Project* which reported that *"About 87 per cent of Australians say that they see cultural diversity as a good thing for society."* (Dunn, K., 2016)

Acceptance of migration and cultural diversity is particularly strong amongst Australia's youth with 91 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that *'multiculturalism is good for Australia'*. Also, 85 percent of young adults agreeing that *'we should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different cultures'*; but only 40 percent in the general sample supported this statement.¹⁴

- **Social cohesion**

Social research suggests a high level of social cohesion. This is illustrated by some 92 per cent of those surveyed indicated having a *'strong sense of belonging in Australia'* with close to half (44%) reporting

¹³ The 2015 Scanlon Foundation National Survey Report, *Mapping Social Cohesion* (Markus, 2015), revealed that 60 per cent of respondents indicated that Australia's current immigration intake was *'about right'* or *'too low'*. It suggests that Australia is a country with one of the highest levels of positive sentiment towards migration in the western world. By contrast, in the United Kingdom, 71 percent disapproved of how their government manages migration. Most likely, the current migration program will continue in the foreseeable future at a historically high level as the government handling of immigration has popular support. The 2015 Australian Institute for Progress survey also found that its respondents were strongly in favour of continued migration with 69 percent favouring current or higher levels of migration. (Australian Institute for Progress, 2015)

¹⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of attitudes towards multiculturalism in Australia see: Scanlon Foundation, *'Multiculturalism. Discussion Paper'*, February 2016 (Scanlon Foundation, 2016).

this "always", and only small proportions "hardly ever" (5%) or "never" (3%); also, 85 per cent reported have 'a sense of pride in the Australian way of life and culture'. (Markus, 2015).

A recent Mind & Mood report on New Australians, based on extensive interviews with Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese and Somali migrants indicated that they see Australia as a peaceful and fair nation and were more optimistic about their future in the 'lucky country' than the local-born middle class. (Megalogenis, 2012) In fact, the vast majority of migrants are happy with their decision to settle in Australia and content with the nature of Australian society and its culture. For example, the majority reported feeling welcomed in Australia 'always' (52%) or 'most of the time' (28%). (Department of Social Services, 2015)

There is also a range of other social indicators that multicultural policy is working well in Australia; let us examine them briefly.

- **Education**

There is a wealth of research consistently showing the education system is utilized as a major upward mobility mechanism by migrants. Children with overseas born parents perform relatively better in education compared to those with Australian born parents. There is however no such difference in second generation.

There is also enormous economic upward intergenerational mobility amongst the new settlers suggesting, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, that in Australia "Achievement has no colour". For example, a study of Sydney's Lebanese Muslim community found that 45 per cent of the parents had left school before the equivalent of Year 10; in contrast, virtually all of their children had completed upper secondary school, with the majority continuing to tertiary education. Although 35 per cent of the fathers were manual labourers, only 10 per cent of the male children are; and while barely 3 per cent of the parents were in the professions, some 20 per cent of their children have professional jobs.

The contrast to Europe could not be sharper. For example, in Germany and The Netherlands, second-generation Muslims are twice as likely to leave school before completion as their native-born counterparts and young Muslims are only one-third as likely to complete post-secondary education as their native-born counterparts.

- **Intermarriage**

A high level of inter-ethnic marriage is usually considered as one of the most definitive measures of the dissolution of social and cultural barriers. In 2009 42% of marriages recorded in Australia involved at least one partner who was not Australian-born. According to the 2006 Census, a majority of third generation Australians of non-English-speaking background had partnered with persons of a different ethnic origin (the majority partnered with persons of Australian or Anglo-Celtic background). Also a majority of Indigenous Australians partnered with non-indigenous Australians.

- **Economic participation**

Some former refugees and migrants, such as Frank Lowy and Richard Pratt, have demonstrated enormous economic successes and accumulated extraordinary wealth. Ruth Ostrow's analysis suggests that about one third of the Australia's richest list is occupied by people who migrated to Australia. (Ostrow R., 1987)

There is also significant literature indicating that diversity boosts creativity, innovation and problem solving in the workplace and adds to competitiveness of industries. For example, a recent McKinsey survey of 366 USA companies suggested that '*...the companies in the top quartile for racial/ethnic diversity were 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median.*'(Hunt et al., 2015;3)

Migrants have greater labour market participation and earn more than Australian born workers. This statement does not apply to humanitarian entrants.

- **Civic and political participation**

'New Australians' have not only developed their own organisations and leaderships but have also started to participate in mainstream political processes and civic undertakings. There has been a wealth of politicians at Federal, State and in particular local levels of government. For example, Nick Greiner, Premier of NSW between 1988 – 1992 was born in Budapest, Hungary; the current premier of Queensland Annastacia Palaszczuk is a daughter of a Polish migrant Henry Palaszczuk, who is a former Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly and the Federal Finance Minister Mathias Cormann was born in Belgium.

Over 60 percent of new settlers apply for Australian citizenship.¹⁵ For example on 26 January 2015 almost 16,000 people from 152 different countries become Australian citizens in public ceremonies across the nation.

Difficulties

Despite these remarkable achievements of and the support for multicultural policies and immigration intake, there some emerging issues that have the potential to undermine social cohesion.

- **Geographical concentration and isolation**

Although there are no ethnic ghettos in the strict sense of this term in Australia, the 2011 Census indicated that some migrants concentrate in particular suburbs of large cities. At the same time, they are highly likely to live in areas where a 30 per cent or higher proportion of the population shares their identity, for example in localities such as Lakemba, Auburn and Greenacre in Sydney and Dandenong South, Dallas and Meadow Heights in Melbourne.

¹⁵ 18 years or older must have lived in Australia for 4 years on a permanent residency visa before one can apply for Australian citizenship. During those 4 years, one may leave Australia for periods that total one year. In the year immediately before application, one must have been in Australia for 9 months or more.

What is of particular concern is that primary social networks in those areas are frequently narrow, with one survey finding that for example 40 per cent of young Muslims of Lebanese origins have never had any Anglo-Celtic friends.

The concentration of migrants was also formed during the days of post WWII migration with some suburbs being regarded as Italian, Greek or Polish. But this distinction has long vanished as in time the migrants became geographically mobile, using their newly created wealth to settle in the suburbs they aspired to and integrating into broader society.

- **Feeling of injustice**

The feeling of discrimination and injustice is reported to exist amongst some young Australian Muslims, especially those of Middle Eastern extraction with strong religious affiliation.

There is also a sense that others are responsible for and must redress. For example, only 13 per cent of Australian-born Lebanese Christians strongly believe governments need to do more to advance the position of migrants; but 54 per cent of Australian-born Lebanese Muslims do. And though the majority of Australian-born Muslims say they have never experienced labour market discrimination themselves, they believe it to be relatively widespread and more so now than a decade ago.

Some of community-based Islamic organisations, usually based on religious foundations tend to legitimise and strengthen the perception of young Muslims' sense of segregation and victimhood.

- **Radicalization**

The problem of Muslim radicalisation has clearly grown over the past several years in Australia. It impacts on a very small segment of the Muslim community in Australia¹⁶, mainly on young men, but it has the potential for extreme violent behaviour and has resulted in some terrorist attacks.

Academics, commentators, community leaders and politicians differ in their analysis of the main contributing factors and how to counter radicalisation. Muslim leaders tend to blame the media for engaging in irresponsible reporting, and most insist that Islam is actually a "*religion of peace*" that plays no role in radicalisation or terrorism.

- **Racism and racial discrimination**

Finally the issue of racism, which if prevalent, may constitute one of the biggest threats to the development and good functioning of a multi-ethnic society and its cohesion. Considering the

¹⁶ There is close to 500,000 Muslims in Australia. If we add up the number of Muslims who have gone overseas to fight for ISIS, those who rioted or have been arrested or are under investigation for terrorism-related offenses we get a total of about 1,000 people. That is 0.2% of the Muslim population in Australia.

historical overhang of past racism of the “*White Australia*” policy and some recent incidents¹⁷, the question needs to be asked: What is the actual level of racism in Australia now?

A recent national data survey from the Challenging Racism Project reported that direct individual experience of racist behavior is relatively low – from 6-7% who have experienced direct physical attacks or unfair treatment to some 20% who have experienced racial slurs and offensive gestures. The survey also demonstrated a very high level of awareness of racism amongst the Australian public, and possibly moral condemnation and disapproval of it. Racist hotspots are reported to be in areas of economic hardship, recent immigration and below-average education levels.

The above data is in line with the Newspoll survey findings published in The Australian newspaper on 17 July 2014 which concluded that *“One in five people agrees the word ‘racist’ describes Australians ‘a lot’, while two thirds agree that describes them ‘a little’. Only 12 percent of people believe Australians are not at all racist.”* The BNLA study of recent humanitarian entrants has also reported some racism with only 5 percent reporting discrimination most commonly on the streets or public transport.

Research also indicated that experiences of racism vary considerably amongst different ethnic groups; there are issues also within immigrant communities. Also, people born overseas report higher rates of racism than those born in Australia, and are twice as likely to experience racism in the workplace, although the Scanlon Foundation surveys also indicated that “settled” immigrants tend to experience lower levels of racist attitudes as more recent arrivals to Australia. (Dunn *et al*, 2009)

The 21 October 2015 address by the former Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells has well illustrated the discrimination in employment impact on Australians from minority backgrounds. She pointed out that *‘...of the 136,000 ongoing Australian Public service employees, less than 20,000 or about 14 per cent, come from a non-English speaking background. In the Senior Executive Service, only 138 out of 1,918 are from non-English speaking background.’* (Fierravanti-Wells, 2015).

The employment discrimination against Muslim Australians would be of particular concern as currently anti-Muslim feelings have become more visible with the Scanlon Foundation surveys indicating that the attitude towards those of the Muslim faith remains relatively high (Markus, 2014). Furthermore, research also points to some deep rooted concern in some section of the population about the cultural impact of Islamic migration. The Scanlon survey (Markus, 2015) found that 25 percent of Australians expressed negative attitudes towards Muslims. A high level of concern was also uncovered by the recent AIP survey last November. Graham Young, AIP Executive Director concluded: *‘There is a very strong feeling that immigrants from Islamic countries are part of a culture war pitting their way of life and beliefs against ours.’ /.../ ‘People*

¹⁷ In 2005 there were a series of racially motivated confrontations between white and Lebanese youths that started around a beachfront suburb, Cronulla, and continued in the following nights as retaliatory violent assaults and large gatherings of protesters in several other Sydney suburbs. This led to an unprecedented police lock-down of Sydney beaches. In 2009 protests were conducted in Melbourne by Indian students and wide scale media coverage in India alleged that a series of robberies and assaults against Indian students should be ascribed to racism in Australia.

are in favour of immigration, so this is not per se, xenophobia.' (Australian Institute for Progress, 2015).

To conclude, there is no doubt that racism remains an issue for Australia and that there are active pockets of racist behaviour and attitudes in existence. However, this falls short of characterising racism as being a prevalent feature of contemporary Australian society.¹⁸

Multiculturalism as a national compact

Australian multiculturalism is a policy for all Australians regardless of their ethnic or national heritage and not a policy aiming at the protection of rights of minority cultures or ethnic interest groups only. In fact it is an important social compact that characterises today's Australia.

The fundamentals of the compact as initially defined by Fraser's 1978 '*Guiding principles*' and in particular Hawke's 1988 '*National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*'.

On one hand, the multicultural compact aims to advance egalitarian, economically robust, culturally sensitive and politically inclusive Australia. Cultural diversity is welcomed as an asset and governments are charged with keeping the societal structures open to be inclusive of newcomers. It aims for full integration of new settlers. The compact also encourages preservation and transfer of minority cultural and linguistic heritage to the next generation and provides some resources to assist with cultural maintenance.

The multicultural compact is underpinned by core Australian values such as equality of the sexes and the rule of law and expresses the principle of respect for and tolerance of racial, cultural and religious differences. In fact, multiculturalism extended Australian egalitarianism and the '*fair go*' ethos to include cultural, linguistic and religious differences. Craig Lundy, Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs, in his recent opinion piece said: '*Our commitment to the rule of law, our parliamentary democracy, equality of opportunity regardless of race, religion or ethnic background; tolerance, fair play, mutual respect – these are the values that have attracted more than 7.5 million migrants to Australia and they are the very reasons why multiculturalism has been such success.*' (Laundy, 2016).

Thus, new settlers are expected to participate on equal terms in all facets of the Australian society, to access economic, educational and other opportunities and to contribute to nation building. In particular, they are expected to join the broader Australian society and its political

¹⁸ There is no agreement amongst academia and public commentators on how deeply rooted is racism in Australian society and how to deal with it. The responses appear to depend upon who you are. People associated with the political left and those Australians who represent for example Aboriginal, Muslim or Indian communities are more likely to claim that Australia continues to be a racist society, indeed full of racial discrimination and prejudice. For example, Aboriginal Reverend Aunty Alex Gater is of the view that, "*We all know that racism is alive and well.*" The same view was expressed by Colin Markham, former NSW parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous affairs who also said, "*We all know that racism is alive and well.*" Other people, especially those who belong to majority groupings and/or hold positions of wealth and/or power and many post WWII migrant communities as well the Chinese and some other communities would be more likely to argue that there is no significant level of racism in contemporary Australia. For example, former Prime Ministers of Australia have stated that "*I do not accept that there is underlying racism in this country*" (John Howard) and that "*I do not believe that racism is at work in Australia*" (Kevin Rudd). See also (Ozdowski, 2012a)

and cultural institutions. Settlers are to participate fully in the Australian economy delivering the so-called '*productive diversity*' dividend (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997).

On the other hand, the compact requires that minority cultures do not conflict with the Australian core values and with other minority groups. The Australian Citizenship pledge reads: '*From this time forward I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.*' Thus, it is also expected that newcomers will give up their foreign loyalties and, in particular, involvement with the country of origin conflicts and ethnic or religious hatreds. The former Prime Minister Tony Abbott expressed this idea by saying that: '*Newcomers to this country are not expected to surrender their heritage but they are expected to surrender their hatreds.*'

However, the recent experience tend to suggest that an upcoming issue is the rejection within a segment of Muslim population of the values of western civilisation, perhaps this is unusual in the context of Australian immigration experience.

The above tenants of this social compact were well summarised by the former Prime Minister Gillard who said: "*Multiculturalism is not only just the ability to maintain our diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is the meeting place of rights and responsibilities. Where the right to maintain one's customs, language and religion is balanced by an equal responsibility to learn English, find work, respect our culture and heritage, and accept women as full equals*". (Australianpolitics.com, 2012).

To summarise, Australian multiculturalism is unquestionably a success story. It reflects a demographic reality, it is supported by national policy and institutions; and it is centred on a social compact that is built on mutual respect and shared rights and responsibilities. Multicultural policies have helped to unlock migrants' capacity and willingness to contribute to broader society. The policies were also able to build and maintain an unparalleled level of social cohesion despite a continuously high and culturally diverse migration intake level since the late 1940's.

Multiculturalism compact, however, must also be seen as a work in progress project. To maintain a high level of social support for the multicultural compact, governments of the day would need to maintain its integrity and not to allow diversity to be used as party political football. On-going government leadership is needed to ensure that the key tenants of multicultural compact are understood and continue to be supported by all Australians and that xenophobia and racism are kept in check.

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