

Australian multiculturalism for a new century:

Towards inclusiveness



Australian multiculturalism for a new century: *Towards inclusiveness*

A report by
National Multicultural Advisory Council
April 1999



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Vision

The Council's vision is of a united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity.

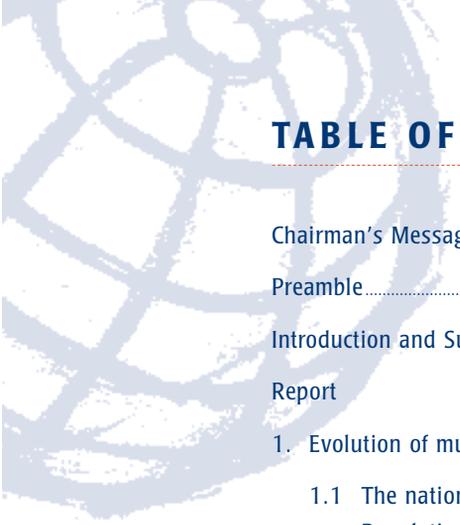


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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



National Multicultural Advisory Council

Mr Neville J Roach
Chairman

Dear Minister

The terms of reference that you gave me and my fellow members of the National Multicultural Advisory Council asked us to 'develop a report which recommends on a policy and implementation framework for the next decade, that is aimed at ensuring that cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia'. We have now completed this task and I am delighted to forward to you our report which we have entitled, *Australian multiculturalism for a new century: Towards inclusiveness*.

As the title indicates, we have concluded that multiculturalism, both as a term and as a policy, has served Australia well and we have recommended its continuance over the next decade which promises to be one of the most eventful periods in the life of Australia. Over the next few years we will see Australia deciding on a new preamble to our Constitution, hosting the Olympic Games and celebrating the start of our second century as a nation. These seminal events provide a great opportunity for us to acknowledge, celebrate and highlight Australia's cultural diversity, both here as well as in our region and globally.

In recent years, Australia has experienced a potentially divisive debate initiated by a few individuals and minority political groups who have been critical of some aspects of our non-discriminatory immigration program and multiculturalism. In the Council's view, Australian democracy and Australian multiculturalism have proved robust enough to withstand this challenge successfully, although there is no room for complacency on matters of such fundamental importance. Input received by us has confirmed the evidence of opinion polls that a substantial majority of Australians are strongly supportive of multiculturalism and value the benefits that cultural diversity has brought to the whole community. The Council is encouraged that these underlying positive attitudes have also been reflected in a reduction in the level of public support towards parties with an agenda of intolerance.

These positive trends provide an immediate and exceptional opportunity to further reduce the influence of any remaining pockets of intolerance in our society, through an unequivocal reaffirmation of our continued acceptance, respect and sensitivity towards all the cultures that enrich modern Australia. The Council strongly recommends that this commitment is championed by the Prime Minister and you, with the endorsement of all

responsible politicians at all levels of government. We are confident that this will have a decisive and positive impact on public opinion and encourage similar leadership in the wider community, enhancing social harmony and enabling our cultural diversity to be a unifying force for Australia.

The primary thrust that the Council is advocating for multicultural policy over the next decade is 'inclusiveness'. Our diversity dividend will be maximised if we all have a sense of ownership and pride in the way we have collectively transformed Australia into one of the world's most successful culturally diverse societies. Multiculturalism must seek to embrace and be embraced by all Australians. It should be seen to be in the interests of all sectors of the Australian community: our original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as all other Australians, whether born here or overseas and whether of English- or non-English-speaking origin.

In developing our recommendations, the Council has proposed a balance between the rights and obligations that membership of the Australian community requires. We have emphasised the need for transparency and accountability for all public multicultural expenditure and have recommended objective criteria by which such funding is approved. To enable ongoing public discussion to be constructive, we have sought to achieve clarity by defining such terms as 'multiculturalism' itself and 'citizenship'. We have stressed that the evolution of multiculturalism has been greatly helped by the institutions and underlying values of Australian democracy which provides the foundation on which cultural diversity will continue to flourish in our society. We emphasise that multiculturalism, as it has developed here, has a uniquely Australian character. Far from denying Australian culture and identity, it has its roots in them and contributes to their continuous enhancement.

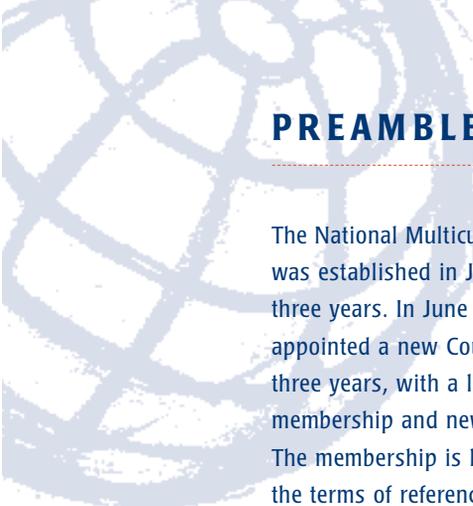
My colleagues and I thank you for giving us the opportunity to contribute to the next phase of Australian multiculturalism. We look forward to working with you and the Australian Government to help implement our recommendations and to carry out any additional tasks you set us that will help promote community harmony and unity by addressing the challenges and maximising the benefits of our cultural diversity.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,



Neville J Roach
Chairman
April 1999



PREAMBLE

The National Multicultural Advisory Council was established in July 1994 for a term of three years. In June 1997 the Government appointed a new Council, for a further three years, with a largely revised membership and new terms of reference. The membership is listed on page iii; the terms of reference are at Appendix A.

This report addresses the first part of the Council's terms of reference that requires it to 'develop a report to the Minister which recommends on a policy and implementation framework for the next decade that is aimed at *ensuring that cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia*'.

In developing this report the Council consulted widely with the community. In December 1997, the Council released an Issues Paper – *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward* – to stimulate community discussion and encourage input to assist the Council in its work. Advertisements in capital city newspapers invited interested individuals and organisations to comment. A list of the 164 contributors who responded to the Issues Paper is at Appendix B. The Council also had the benefit of several qualitative and quantitative surveys of community attitudes on a range of immigration and multicultural issues.

Further, Council members have accepted numerous invitations to speak to the media and to attend seminars and meetings to consult with a wide cross-section of the community.

This dialogue has included meeting representatives of other advisory councils working in related areas, eg the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, the Multicultural Advisory Committees of both the Australia Council and the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, the Australian Citizenship Council and the Civics Education Group; discussions at business forums, a workshop organised by the Australian Multicultural Foundation and the de Bono Foundation, meetings with representatives of community service organisations, schools, universities, business organisations and councils, religious, social and sporting bodies, women's groups; the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and several of its State and regional constituent councils, State and Territory Ethnic or Multicultural Commissions; and attendance at numerous cultural functions and community meetings. The Council has also held discussions with senior Federal politicians from both the Government and the Opposition and individual members have met with several others at Federal, State, Territory and Local Government levels.



INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Evolution of multicultural policy

Australia is a culturally diverse society. Our indigenous people have always had a rich variety of cultures, languages and customs. Even the members of the First Fleet came from a number of ethnic backgrounds. Our diversity has grown continually ever since, and especially during the last fifty years, as a result of large-scale migration from non-English-speaking countries and the eventual adoption of a non-discriminatory immigration policy. The population has grown through immigration which has been actively encouraged by the governments of the day, particularly since 1945.

Among the most profound changes in Australia over the past half century has been the evolution in public policy from the White Australia Policy to a non-discriminatory immigration policy, with the parallel transition from *assimilation* to *integration* and then to *multiculturalism*.

The policy of assimilation spans the period up to the mid 1960s and was based on a belief in the benefits of homogeneity and a vision of Australia as a racially pure white nation. It effectively excluded non-European immigration. It also dominated the treatment of our indigenous population, the forceful adoption of indigenous children into white Australian families being just one example of assimilationist thinking.

Integration, in the broad sense, does not imply minority cultures giving way totally to a dominant culture. Instead, they influence the dominant culture which is modified to some extent by the newer

cultures. Integration, however, does not encourage ongoing cultural diversity – everyone is expected to adopt the integrated culture.

Multiculturalism continues the strong emphasis of previous policies on social harmony but recognises and positively accepts that Australia is, and will remain, a culturally diverse country; and it offers a set of guidelines for enhancing social harmony. It seeks to ensure that this diversity is a positive force in our society and recognises that the absorption of newly arrived people into the Australian community necessarily involves all sectors of the community making some adjustments. There are many aspects of the Australian way of life that newcomers are required to accept. These include the law, our democratic form of government, and English as the national language. But, equally, Australian multiculturalism recognises that many migrants and their children will choose to retain many of their customs and cultural traditions, some of which will be adopted by other Australians.

In other words, the inclusion and participation of migrants and their descendants in Australian life occurs naturally and, within the bounds of our democratic and legal framework, the individual whether migrant or Australian-born must be free to choose which customs to retain and which to adopt.

The changes Australia has experienced in recent decades have had major, but differentiated, impacts on all sectors of Australian society. While most Australians have benefited, some may see the world

changing and moving too quickly, threatening their employment and wellbeing and even the values upon which their lives have been built, values that are so important for their self-identification as Australians. Such concerns are felt by numerous people across both urban and rural Australia and have given impetus to a search for scapegoats. For a portion of the community, multiculturalism has become one of the scapegoats. As a result we have seen a growth in criticism of multiculturalism, including the emergence of political parties that have sought to exploit community concern by advocating thinly veiled policies of bigotry and division.

The Council believes, nonetheless, that multicultural policies have served Australia very well, contributing to a fairer and more just society. Australia, with all its cultural diversity, remains a cohesive and harmonious society and this diversity has contributed significantly to its economic, cultural and social sophistication.

Like all areas of public policy, however, multicultural strategies need to be continually reviewed and updated in the context of the changes in our society and our relationship with the global community. The Council has undertaken a review not only through its own deliberations but has also taken into account a wealth of input from widespread consultations, submissions to the Council's Issues Paper *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward*, relevant literature and commissioned research and reports. This report contains the Council's recommendations arising out of the review.

The continuing importance of multiculturalism

The Council supports the view that an important measure by which a civilisation should be judged is its treatment of minorities. It could be argued that the welcome and assistance Australia's governments and people have given to new settlers, including refugees, reflect our commitment to such a principle: because it is the right thing to do and because the values of justice and equity are deeply embedded in our democratic principles. These new settlers, in return, have contributed greatly to Australian society, often in the face of major difficulties. The combined goodwill of all has been crucial in the evolution of our harmonious multicultural society which is a major achievement of Australian democracy.

A wide range of multicultural policies and programs have been enacted over the past twenty-five years and Australia's social, administrative and legal infrastructure has adjusted to the needs and potential of an increasingly diverse community. Some programs have been initiated by the Commonwealth Government, others by State, Territory and Local Governments. The education sector, business and unions have also contributed. Much has happened among social, cultural and religious groups and in the wider community because most people have become comfortable with the fact that their daily lives now routinely involve meeting and dealing with people from different backgrounds. The continuing social harmony of our community owes much to these combined efforts.

The 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* stated that ‘the challenges of a multicultural society do not simply resolve themselves. Government action – in the form of multicultural policies – is needed in certain areas to promote social harmony, to ensure a fair go and to harness our human resources in the most productive way for Australia’s future’. The Council believes this is as valid today as then. Australia is, and will always be, a multicultural society, irrespective of our immigration intake, and multiculturalism remains an important means of addressing the challenges and opportunities of our cultural diversity.

The meaning of multiculturalism

One of the issues the Council was asked to consider was the terminology, of which the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘multiculturalism’ are the most important.

The adjective ‘multicultural’ is frequently used to mean ‘multi-ethnic’ or ‘culturally diverse’, and there would appear to be little disagreement in the community that this is an appropriate word to describe Australian society.

The Council is aware that the noun ‘multiculturalism’, which denotes an active public policy, appears to generate stronger reactions, both positive and negative, than the adjective ‘multicultural’. Among the questions asked in the Council’s Issues Paper *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward* was: ‘Is multiculturalism an appropriate term to describe a policy for managing cultural diversity, or has it outlived its usefulness? If the latter, what alternative term would you suggest?’

The answers provided were quite polarised and some submissions reflected a major misunderstanding of the meaning of the term ‘multiculturalism’ as it is used in public policy. Most saw it positively, as a policy that delivers significant benefits to Australia and is needed to ensure justice and equity for all Australians. On the other hand, some submissions suggested that multiculturalism applies only to migrants from a non-English-speaking background and seems to deny Australian culture. A number criticised what they perceived as overemphasis on the rights of particular groups without stressing their corresponding obligations.

Having considered all the input, the Council believes, however, that the term ‘multiculturalism’ has served the Australian community well and best describes our positive acceptance of the reality and significance of our cultural diversity and the proactive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from it. The Council also notes that opinion polls indicate a high level of support for multiculturalism. The Council has therefore recommended the continued use of the term, with the addition of the prefix ‘Australian’ wherever appropriate, to recognise that our implementation of multiculturalism has been uniquely Australian.

The Council acknowledges the challenge arising from the wide differences in understanding of the meaning of the term ‘multiculturalism’, particularly between those who are positive and those who are negative about multicultural policy. The Council believes that to achieve the objective set out in its terms of reference of ‘ensuring that cultural diversity is a

unifying force for Australia’, it is essential that there is clarity in the understanding and use of the term ‘multiculturalism’. Accordingly, it has recommended the following definition of multiculturalism:

Australian multiculturalism is a term which recognises and celebrates Australia’s cultural diversity. It accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures and values of Australian democracy. It also refers to the strategies, policies and programs that are designed to:

- *make our administrative, social and economic infrastructure more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of our culturally diverse population;*
- *promote social harmony among the different cultural groups in our society;*
- *optimise the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians.*

A vision for Australian multiculturalism

The Council is confident that the great diversity of skills and talents of the Australian people, and the strength of our democratic system and the principles and values that underpin it, will ensure that our culturally diverse community achieves success through all its members working together towards a common vision.

The Council has recommended the adoption of the following vision for Australian multiculturalism:

A united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity.

The Council sees this vision as the ultimate goal and guiding rationale for multicultural policies and the most viable option we must pursue as a nation if we are to maximise the dividends of our diversity, while continuing to avoid the serious communal disharmony that has weakened many other pluralistic societies.

The democratic roots of Australian multiculturalism

The Council starts from the proposition that Australian multiculturalism has been built on our free democratic system. Australian democracy guarantees us our freedom, our basic human rights and our fundamental equalities. Likewise, Australian democracy requires our loyalty and our commitment to the basic structures and principles of our society.

The democratic foundations of our society contain a balance of rights and obligations: the basic structures and principles of Australian democracy make us a free society but our freedom in practice is dependent upon our abiding by our mutual civic obligations; as Australians we have equal rights and equal obligations but, while all Australians have a right to expect equal opportunities, our society does not guarantee equal outcomes; and we owe loyalty to Australia,

whose laws, institutions and traditions guarantee our basic human rights.

This is a constitutive principle of our nation that is of fundamental importance to the development of Australian multiculturalism. Not only has our democracy evolved in such a way as to give rise to multiculturalism, but our democratic institutions and traditions also provide the foundation and framework that enable diversity in many forms to flourish in our society.

The Council believes that the best way to ensure that multicultural Australia continues to develop as an essentially harmonious society, for the good of all Australians, is to protect and strengthen our democratic values and institutions and to continue to build multicultural policies and programs on the foundation of our democratic system.

Multiculturalism and concepts of 'citizenship'

The Council believes that it is important to explore the relationship between multiculturalism and concepts of 'citizenship'. Throughout this report the terms Australian Citizen and Australian Citizenship are used when referring to the legal status defined in the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*. The terms 'citizen' and 'citizenship' are used when referring to membership of the wider Australian community which is shared by Australian Citizens and permanent residents, and to the rights and obligations that flow from such membership including the desirable civic values of the community.

In its legal sense Australian Citizenship dates from 26 January 1949, when the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* came into force and the status of 'Australian Citizen' came into existence. The establishment of Australian Citizenship was an important practical and symbolic step in the development of Australian nationhood. It provided a distinct status of being 'Australian' and a legal basis for full and formal membership of the Australian nation.

Australian Citizenship has played an important unifying role in the development of Australia's nationhood and the modern multicultural society which has evolved with it.

The Council believes it is highly desirable for Australian permanent residents to acquire Australian Citizenship when they become eligible to do so, and has recommended the active promotion of the benefits of Australian Citizenship to encourage its take-up. However, it must be recognised that permanent residents, who are not yet eligible for or have not yet chosen to acquire Australian Citizenship, are nonetheless members of the Australian community and have all the rights and obligations of Australian Citizens except those that arise exclusively from Australian Citizenship.¹

An aspect of the debate of more direct interest to the Council is the relationship between 'citizenship' and multiculturalism. The combined phrase 'multicultural citizenship' has been used by some writers

¹ For details, see Appendix F.

while others argue that the concept of multiculturalism should give way to that of ‘citizenship’.

In the Council’s view, the concepts are interlinked but each is important in its own right. ‘Citizenship’ should be primarily seen as a bond or glue, consisting of shared membership in a political community – a commitment to the Constitution and the laws, the rights and obligations and the core values and practices of Australian democracy. This expanded idea of ‘citizenship’ does not negate the place and role of Australian multiculturalism as defined in this report. Instead, the Council sees the relationship between ‘citizenship’ and multiculturalism as symbiotic and complementary.

In fact, the reason Australian multiculturalism is able to make our diversity a great resource for all Australians is precisely because, at its core, are the same values that are embedded in the notion of ‘citizenship’, including respect of difference, tolerance and a commitment to freedom and equal opportunity. Nor does multiculturalism represent a threat to unity because, while our democracy gives all ‘citizens’ the freedom to retain cherished traditions and customs, it also requires an overriding commitment to Australia’s national interests. Multiculturalism will also enhance unity further as it develops the increased inclusiveness recommended in this report.

Multiculturalism and Australian culture

A strongly expressed view in some of the public submissions from respondents who claim ‘Anglo’ or ‘old Australia’ heritage

is that multiculturalism is a negative and divisive feature of Australian society, creating disdain for people of Anglo-Celtic origins and denigrating Australian culture by promoting other cultures as more worthy. They argue that this contributes to a general sense of unease and causes unacceptable levels of separateness in society. While acknowledging that the assimilationist policies of the past asked too much of migrants, these respondents criticised multiculturalism for asking too much of Australian-born people and not enough of migrants. The Council respects the people expressing these concerns but believes their views reflect an incorrect perception of multiculturalism, pointing to an important communication strategy priority.

Australian culture is dynamic. It starts with and retains its links to our total heritage, but is not a fossilised entity which remains static from the time a particular group sets foot on Australian soil. Rather, it is a living, changing and interacting set of life patterns. It has been modified and enhanced by the arrival of many migrant groups. It continues to be developed by the evolution of ideas and customs within Australia and by global influences.

The freedom that our democracy guarantees includes the freedom to express and maintain one’s cultural and artistic preferences. Of course cultural maintenance is not something aimed at simply maintaining a cultural status quo, but includes the development of new and evolving cultural practices.

The Council, therefore, considers that Australian multiculturalism, far from

denying Australian culture, is in fact one of its major achievements. In turn, multiculturalism is an integral dimension of Australian culture and is helping to shape that culture.

The positive and mutually supportive relationship between Australian culture and Australian multiculturalism should be highlighted in a communication strategy.

Multiculturalism for all Australians

The Council believes that, for the coming decade, which will see the start of our second century as a nation, Australian multiculturalism should have ‘inclusiveness’ as a major focus. Multiculturalism in its inclusive sense is crucial to our developing nationhood and Australian identity. It should emphasise the things that unite us as a people – our common membership of the Australian community; our shared desire for social harmony; the benefits of our diversity; our evolving national character and identity.

By emphasising the inclusive nature of the concept and practice of Australian multiculturalism, the Council is seeking to correct the misconception that it is concerned mainly with immigration and minority ethnic communities. The Council strongly endorses the view that multiculturalism is about and for all Australians and that it is crucially concerned with our present and evolving ‘citizenship’, national character and identity.

The Council views multiculturalism as relevant to all Australians, both as a description of the kind of culturally diverse society we seek and as a public policy.

It is an important objective, therefore, that multiculturalism seeks to embrace and be embraced by all Australians. It must be seen as relevant to the interests of all sectors of the Australian community: our original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as all other Australians, whether born here or overseas and whether of English- or non-English-speaking origin.

The Council believes it is very important and appropriate to specifically acknowledge the role the receiving community, comprising both Australian and overseas born, has played, particularly over the last 50 years, in welcoming migrants from all over the world, thus helping to build modern multicultural Australia. While the receiving community has itself become progressively more multicultural, Australians whose origin is wholly or partly from Great Britain and Ireland can take special pride in their heritage for its substantive contribution to the development and success of Australian society. This is exemplified in the underlying philosophy and principles and the essential components of Australia’s democratic system, which is the foundation on which our society has been built, and in our special social values of mateship and *a fair go*, which contribute so much to community harmony.

The Council also believes it needs to stress its deep concern about the state of relations between indigenous people and the wider community. Indigenous people have suffered much injustice and oppression and as a group continue to suffer significant disadvantage relative to the rest of the Australian community.

In the Council's view, it should be a matter of the highest priority, for both moral and practical reasons, that *all* Australians now address these fundamental issues which must be resolved fairly and honourably if we are to achieve true reconciliation.

The Council notes that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation supports a new Constitutional preamble which would acknowledge the unique status of indigenous people and their original ownership of this land. The Council notes that the Government has agreed to hold a referendum on this matter, in conjunction with the November 1999 referendum on an Australian Republic. The Council has recommended that any revision of the preamble of the Australian Constitution incorporates recognition of the diverse backgrounds of the Australian people, including such acknowledgment of the unique status of our indigenous people.

To promote inclusiveness further the Council proposes that priority be given to outreach strategies that build bridges among individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds.

A call for leadership

Because of the pervasive influence of multiculturalism on the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of all Australians, now and in the future, it warrants and demands leadership and positive, proactive support and commitment by political, public service, business and community leaders, educators, the media and individual Australians. Without such leadership, divisive and intolerant views and attitudes can spread to the point where they

threaten community harmony, causing significant social and economic stress, and even serious damage. On the other hand, through strong leadership, the benefits of our diversity can be accelerated and maximised, and enjoyed and celebrated by all Australians.

The Council particularly emphasises the critical importance of political leadership and support across the political spectrum, but at least by those in Government and Opposition who should work together so that the ongoing development of multiculturalism enjoys the consensus that marked the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*.

While recognising the importance of free political debate, the Council urges all responsible political leaders to decline to lend support to or confer any political respectability or credibility on individuals or parties that espouse policies that violate the spirit of the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996.²

Principles of Australian multiculturalism

The goals and principles that underpin multicultural policy, as articulated in the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, have continuing relevance and importance. While most Australians are likely to agree with the thrust of the

² The Joint Parliamentary Statement reaffirmed the importance of maintaining Australia as a tolerant and open society, united by an overriding commitment to our nation and its democratic institutions and values, and denounced racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to be. The full text is at page 37 of this report.

National Agenda definitions for both rights and obligations, great care must be taken to avoid any suggestion that they stem exclusively, or even predominantly, from multiculturalism. In fact, they arise from Australian democracy.

The following statement of the foundations and principles of Australian multiculturalism incorporates not only the goals and principles of the 1989 *National Agenda*, but also reflects the revised focus that the Council is proposing:

Australian democracy guarantees us our civic freedoms and our fundamental rights and equality, and it is the institutions of Australian democracy that enable diversity in our society to flourish. Australian society is diverse, encompassing a wealth of cultures, histories and traditions, rural and urban, of indigenous and all other Australians. The proper functioning of our society requires us to manage the consequences of our cultural diversity in the interest of the individual and society as a whole. This will be achieved, and Australian multiculturalism will be a continuing and fundamental strength of our society, if the Australian people and the institutions of our society base their actions and measure their achievements on the following principles for living with cultural diversity:

- **Civic Duty:** all Australians are obliged to support the basic structures and principles of Australian society – our Constitution, democratic institutions and values – which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish;

- **Cultural Respect:** subject to the law, the right to express one’s own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal obligation to accept the right of others to do the same;
- **Social Equity:** all Australians are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity enabling them to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth;
- **Productive Diversity:** the significant cultural, social and economic dividends which arise from the diversity of our population should be maximised for the benefit of all Australians.

The Council proposes that these principles be adopted as the basis of an enhanced and refocussed multicultural policy framework, and emphasises that the initiatives recommended in this report are directed to translating these principles into action. In particular, it suggests:

- highlighting that Australian multiculturalism has been built on the evolving values of Australian democracy and ‘citizenship’;
- ensuring that it adequately reflects the balance of rights and obligations expected of all ‘citizens’;
- making it inclusive so that it seeks to embrace and be embraced by all sections of the community by:
 - acknowledging the contribution of all Australians to the success of our multicultural society, and

in particular the heritage of Great Britain and Ireland from which our democracy has evolved;

- stressing the imperative nature and urgency of reconciliation between our indigenous people and all other Australians;
- promoting acceptance and mutual respect by all Australians of our diverse cultures;
- drawing a clear conceptual distinction between settlement and multicultural strategies;
- ensuring that we maximise the social, cultural and economic benefits of our diversity and address any of its weaknesses;
- ensuring that the funding of multicultural programs is based on defined criteria and accountability;
- seeking political leadership and cross-party support for Australian multiculturalism;
- stressing the importance of leadership, in all areas of life, for the harmony and wellbeing of a culturally diverse society.

Unifying force

While this report recommends a range of ways in which Australian multiculturalism should be enhanced and refocussed, the policy framework that the Council proposes for the next decade is built on the imperatives of making our cultural diversity a unifying force and of maximising the dividends of this diversity.

Recommendations that are particularly relevant to ensuring that cultural diversity

is a unifying force for all Australians include: recognising its foundations in Australian democracy; stressing the balance between the rights and responsibilities of all ‘citizens’; emphasising inclusiveness; continuing usage of the term ‘multiculturalism’, but clearly defined, and with the prefix ‘Australian’ so as to emphasise its unique Australian character – which needs to be explained widely to the Australian community; emphasising the value of Australian Citizenship; linking Australian multiculturalism to our common human condition and membership of the Australian community or ‘citizenship’; arguing that Australian multiculturalism is derived from Australian culture and identity and contributes to their ongoing development; and separating settlement programs which focus on migrants, from Australian multiculturalism, which relates to all Australians.

Multicultural funding: a good investment

One of the criticisms of multiculturalism, which was also present in several submissions to the Council, is that it costs huge sums of public money – some say several billion dollars! Some also complain that such funding is discriminatory because, in their view, it only helps minority ethnic communities.

In the Council’s view, funding *per se* is not a central issue, provided justification and accountability standards are met. Emotive arguments about funding can be a distraction from the important questions that such funding aims to address, such as how our undeniably multicultural society

should build community harmony and derive the benefits of its diversity.

Multicultural programs are, after all, designed in the national interest, and funds should continue to be available to them as an investment. The dividends are a more fair, stable and harmonious society which is also increasingly able to reap economic rewards from the domestic and international opportunities its diversity offers.

The Council also believes that many of the criticisms of multicultural funding are based on incorrect perceptions of the dollars involved which, while not inconsiderable, are much lower than the wildly exaggerated amounts sometimes claimed.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that Australian attitudes and policies on the role of government are evolving to place greater emphasis on transparency, efficiency and accountability in government programs, and on the need to achieve practical outcomes. While the Council believes that vigorous promotion of multicultural strategies in all areas of public policy is justified and should continue, it fully accepts that all funding emanating from such strategies should be subject to the same scrutiny as all government programs. It proposes that the main criteria by which the merits of funding for multicultural programs are assessed should be:

- **need** – subject to the eligibility criteria for each program, where an individual or a group has a need arising out of ethnicity or other cultural difference it ought to be met, just as all other special needs are met within our democratic social infrastructure;

- **benefit to Australia** – where it can be demonstrated that addressing a problem or exploiting the advantages of cultural diversity provides an economic, social or cultural benefit to Australia. This is consistent with government funding of programs in other areas designed to produce beneficial outcomes for Australia;
- **social justice and equity** – all programs should be adjusted to address disadvantage or loss of entitlement arising out of ethnicity or cultural differences, just as other forms of disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups relative to other Australians are addressed.

Diversity dividends

While it is appropriate to ensure that the funding of multicultural programs is fully justified and subject to the highest standards of accountability, it is important to recognise that most of these costs are investments that enable Australia to maximise the benefits from its cultural diversity. These investments, many of which are frequently grouped together under the banner of productive diversity, serve our strategic national interests and produce substantial dividends that accrue to the entire Australian community.

Cultural diversity enables nations and organisations to meet the challenges and reap the benefits of global markets, global competition and continuous rapid change in a number of ways and Australia, as one of the most multicultural nations in the world, is particularly well placed to obtain all such benefits. The benefits of cultural diversity

will not, however, be fully realised without effective proactive management. This needs to address two dimensions of productive diversity, one that maximises its potential benefits and another that minimises its potential disadvantages.

Accordingly, the Council considers that future multicultural policy give high priority to initiatives in education and training that promote productive diversity principles and develop the skills needed to maximise the diversity dividend. This could be done in the first instance in business education and training in both the university and TAFE sectors and, where applicable, through partnerships between business educators and the business community. The Council sees great merit in enhancing diversity planning in all sectors of the community and welcomes recent initiatives by the Commonwealth to do so. In particular, the Council welcomes the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, which was developed cooperatively by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. The *Charter* is part of the public sector's focus on providing quality services to clients. This focus reflects the recognition that a diverse client-base has diverse needs and that service providers ought to be aware of these needs and sufficiently flexible and responsive to service them. Because the private and community sectors also serve diverse clienteles the *Charter* has direct relevance to them as well.

The Council therefore has recommended that private and community sector organisations consider how the principles of the *Charter of Public*

Service in a Culturally Diverse Society might be relevant to their diversity management and planning processes, and develop similar charters appropriate to their specific environment and the needs of their constituents, customers and employees.

The Council also stresses the importance of English language proficiency to enable all Australians to participate in and contribute fully to the Australian economy and society, and skills in languages other than English which boost our international relations, trade and investment. It therefore strongly supports investment in English language training for adult migrants and the continuation of programs to maintain and enhance skills in languages other than English.

Central coordinating agency

A primary role for government is to provide political and moral leadership to ensure that there is widespread community acceptance and support for a proactive approach to multicultural policy. All government policies and programs, not just those that have a specific multicultural objective, must take into account the diversity that permeates our society.

In the Council's view, the best way for the Australian Government to demonstrate both leadership and commitment, and to ensure that multicultural principles are applied consistently and effectively across all departments, is through the establishment of an independent central agency responsible for the oversight of the Government's multicultural program.

The proposed agency would have primary responsibility for implementing the policy framework recommended by this report. This includes supporting the multicultural programs of other Commonwealth departments and agencies, coordinating the Commonwealth's role in relation to State, Territory and Local Governments, the private sector and the wider community, monitoring and reporting on progress and updating the recommendations periodically.

The Council does not wish to be too prescriptive with regard to the precise form and location of the proposed agency. What is important is that the agency has the credibility and general acceptance that it needs to be effective. For this it is essential that it is clear to opinion leaders and opinion makers, its clients and partners, and the Australian community that the agency enjoys the support of the Prime Minister.

The Council has therefore recommended the formation of a central coordinating agency, responsible to the Prime Minister or a Cabinet Minister, to help formulate and implement the Australian Government's multicultural policies and to coordinate them with the initiatives of other levels of government and the wider community.

Communication strategy

While opinion polls and submissions to the Council consistently confirm that the majority of Australians support Australian multiculturalism, community harmony will be enhanced if the concerns of critics are treated seriously and responded to constructively even though they represent a minority.

The Council believes that much of the concern that some Australians have regarding multiculturalism stems from a lack of information or misunderstanding about it. This is evident from the submissions the Council received, as well as from various forums in which Council members have been involved. Therefore, there is a pressing need to bring more clarity to multicultural policy, and to communicate a clear message to the wider community, including government and non-government agencies, and the Council has recommended that a communication strategy forms an intrinsic and major part of future multicultural programs.

The communication strategy should aim to raise awareness about our cultural diversity and to create mutual understanding between different groups in our community. By promoting the inclusive nature of multiculturalism, different elements of our community, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, will be drawn closer together. An important element of communication is that to be truly effective it needs to be a two-way process. It is therefore essential that the communication strategy involves an active program of consultation and discussion as well as other means of gaining feedback from the community to ensure that the development of Australian multiculturalism always takes such input into account.

Conclusion

The Council is optimistic about Australia's future as a culturally diverse society and is confident that Australian multiculturalism will continue to be a defining feature of

our evolving national identity and contribute substantial benefits to all Australians.

There is every reason to expect that the Australian community will become even more diverse in its racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic mix over the next decade. Distinctions will blur as dominant and minority cultures adapt to coexistence and these interactions and influences on each other give rise to new variations of Australian culture.

Inclusiveness is the key to the principles of Australian multiculturalism recommended by the Council. These principles articulate the essential balance of rights and obligations that are necessary to a just and united society. They have evolved over our history as a nation and have helped Australia to meet the challenges to our social harmony that have occurred from time to time, including in recent experience.

The capacity, good sense, goodwill and determination of the Australian people to constructively address the challenges we face should give us all confidence that we can and will reap the dividends of our cultural diversity and together achieve the vision for Australian multiculturalism recommended by the Council of

a united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity.

CH. 1 EVOLUTION OF MULTICULTURAL POLICY

1.1 THE NATION'S CHANGING FACE

Australia is a culturally diverse society. Our indigenous people have always had a rich variety of cultures, languages and customs. Even the members of the First Fleet came from a number of ethnic backgrounds. Our diversity has grown continually ever since, and especially during the last fifty years, as a result of large-scale migration from non-English-speaking countries and the eventual adoption of a non-discriminatory immigration policy. The population has grown through immigration which has been actively encouraged by the governments of the day, particularly since 1945. Together with population growth, rapid changes have also occurred in the demographic, social and economic profiles of the population. As many of these characteristics have a bearing on multicultural policy and community attitudes to our cultural diversity, the Council asked the Australian Bureau of

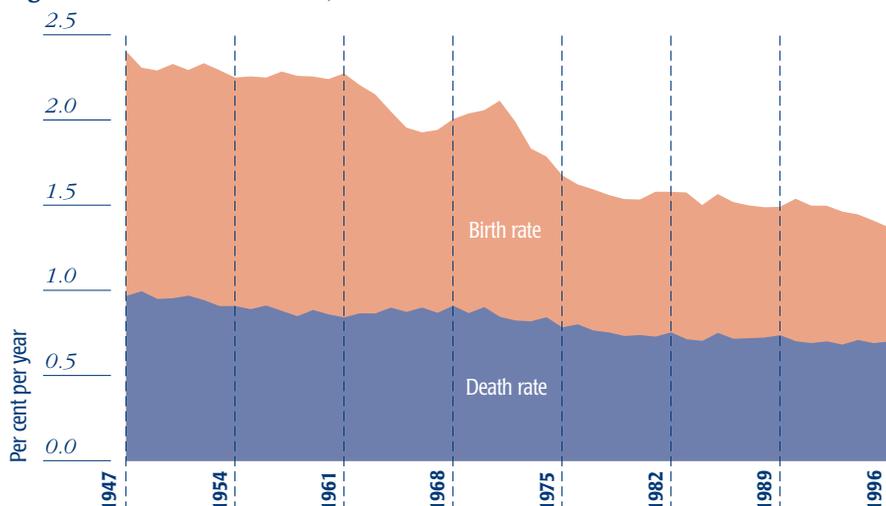
Statistics to prepare a report analysing Australia's population. This chapter is largely based on this report.³

Population

Other than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia was mostly settled by migrants from Great Britain and Ireland, at least until World War II. The population reached 7.6 million in 1947 and doubled by 1979. At 30 June 1997, the resident population of Australia was estimated to be 18.5 million people. Population projections prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, using various assumptions of future fertility, mortality and overseas migration levels, estimate that the population will increase to between 22.1 and 26.4 million by 2051.

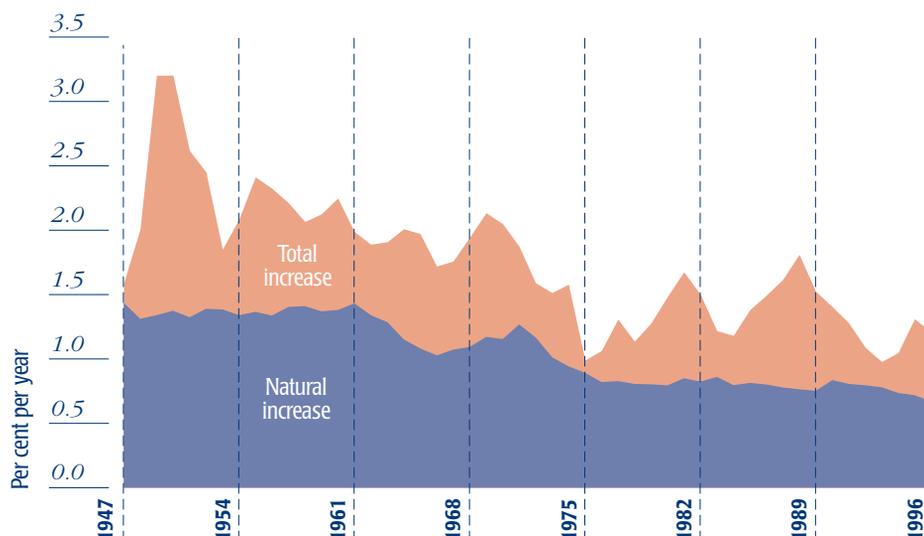
³ The full report is available from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, or through its web site: <http://www.immi.gov.au>

Figure 1: Birth and death rates, Australia



Source: Australian Demographic Trends (Cat. no. 3102.0)

Figure 2: Population growth rates, Australia



Source: Australian Demographic Trends (Cat. no. 3102.0)

Country of birth

Overseas migration has played a key role in shaping Australia as one of the world's most culturally diverse nations. In the 1996 census, people named nearly 200 countries of birth. Migration since World War II has resulted in the overseas-born population

increasing from 744,000 (9.8% of the population) in 1947 to 4.3 million in 1996, representing 23.3% of the total resident population of Australia. All in all, around 42% of Australia's population was born overseas or has at least one parent born overseas.

Table 1: Main countries of birth of overseas-born residents

Country	Census years			
	1947(a)	1971(a)	1981(b)	1996(b)
	%	%	%	%
United Kingdom and Ireland	72.7	42.2	37.8	28.6
New Zealand	5.9	3.1	5.6	7.4
Italy	4.5	11.2	9.2	6.1
Former Yugoslav Republic	0.8	5.0	5.0	4.6
Vietnam	n/a	0.0	1.4	3.9
Greece	1.7	6.2	4.9	3.3
China	0.9	0.7	0.9	2.8
Germany	2.0	4.3	3.7	2.8
Philippines	0.0	0.1	0.5	2.4
Netherlands	0.3	3.8	3.2	2.2
Malaysia	0.2	0.6	1.0	2.0
Other countries	11.0	22.8	26.8	33.8
Total overseas born	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total overseas population ('000)	744.2	2579.3	3111.0	4258.7

(a) Census counts.

(b) Estimated resident population.

Source: Year Book Australia, 1998, Table 5.40 (Cat. no. 1301.0), and updated.

Australian Citizenship

Prior to 1949 the legal status of people living in Australia, who were not 'aliens', was that of British subject. With the passing of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*, which came into effect on 26 January 1949, most became Australian Citizens automatically. Since that time over 3.1 million overseas-born people have applied for and been granted Australian Citizenship. At the 1996 census, the overall Australian Citizenship rate (the percentage of overseas-born residents in Australia eligible for Australian Citizenship who are Australian Citizens) was 73.2%, up from 65.8% at the 1991 census. People who had lived in Australia longer were more likely to have become Australian Citizens. However, the Australian Citizenship rate varied considerably between people from different countries. At the 1996 census, birthplaces with the highest rates were Laos (97.6%), Lebanon (97.4%), Greece (97.3%), Hungary (96.6%)

and Latvia (96.5%). Those birthplaces with the lowest rates were Japan (25.3%), New Zealand (35.1%), Malaysia (56.9%) and the USA (57.3%). The rate for those born in the United Kingdom increased from 52.7% in 1991 to 62.2% in 1996, although at 397,374 they represented the highest number (41%) of eligible residents who had not acquired Australian Citizenship.

Religious affiliation

The religious profile of the population has changed with the arrival of migrants into Australia. Up to the end of World War II, European settlers brought their traditional religions with the result that in 1947 39% of the population were Anglican, 21% Catholic, and 28% reported affiliation to other Christian denominations and beliefs. Since then, the proportion declaring a Christian faith has declined from 88% to 71% in 1996. Immigration to Australia, firstly from Europe and later from the Middle East and South-East Asia,

Table 2: Country of birth of settler arrivals 1962–66 to 1992–96, Australia

1962–66			1972–76		
Country	'000	%	Country	'000	%
United Kingdom and Ireland	305.8	49.2	United Kingdom and Ireland	184.7	40.9
Greece	71.3	11.5	Yugoslavia	23.5	5.2
Italy	62.3	10.0	New Zealand	16.9	3.7
Yugoslavia	29.3	4.7	Lebanon	15.3	3.4
Malta	19.7	3.2	USA	14.5	3.2
Germany	16.7	2.7	Greece	14.0	3.1

1982–86			1992–96		
Country	'000	%	Country	'000	%
United Kingdom and Ireland	94.1	21.2	United Kingdom and Ireland	52.2	12.2
New Zealand	47.4	10.7	New Zealand	47.0	11.0
Vietnam	42.2	9.5	China	27.0	6.3
Philippines	17.3	3.9	Hong Kong	25.9	6.1
South Africa	13.1	2.9	Vietnam	20.1	4.7
Poland	12.4	2.8	Philippines	19.3	4.5

Source: Year Book Australia, 1998, Table 5.37 (Cat. no. 1301.0).

has helped to reshape this profile with relatively small but growing numbers of people adhering to faiths such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. However, a more significant trend has been the rise in the proportion of the population who do not have evident religious affiliations. In 1996, almost one quarter of the population either reported having no religion (17%) or preferred not to answer the census question (9%). Together, these groups represented only 13% of the population in 1971.

Language spoken at home

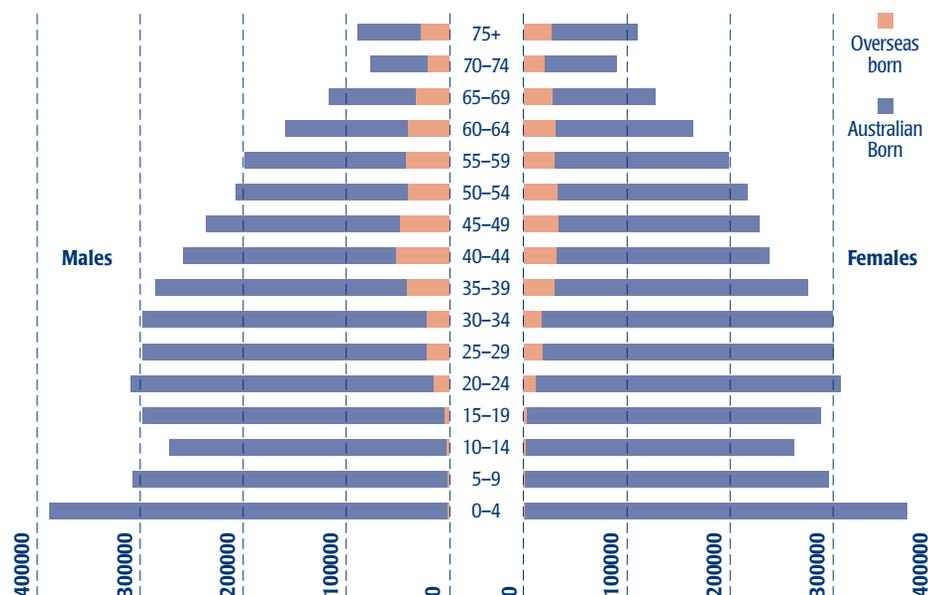
English is the national language, but a substantial proportion of the population aged five years and over speak languages other than English at home. In 1996, nearly 2.5 million people (16% of the total population aged five and over) spoke other languages at home. Of these, 74% were

overseas-born and 26% Australian-born (most likely Australian-born children of migrants). The main languages spoken by overseas-born people were Chinese (15.5%), Italian (11.6%), Greek (7.4%), Vietnamese (6.3%) and Arabic/Lebanese (5.3%). Among the Australian-born children of migrants, the main languages spoken were Italian (19.3%), Greek (15.7%), Arabic/Lebanese (7.9%), Aboriginal languages (5.7%) and Chinese (4.5%).

Age and gender structure

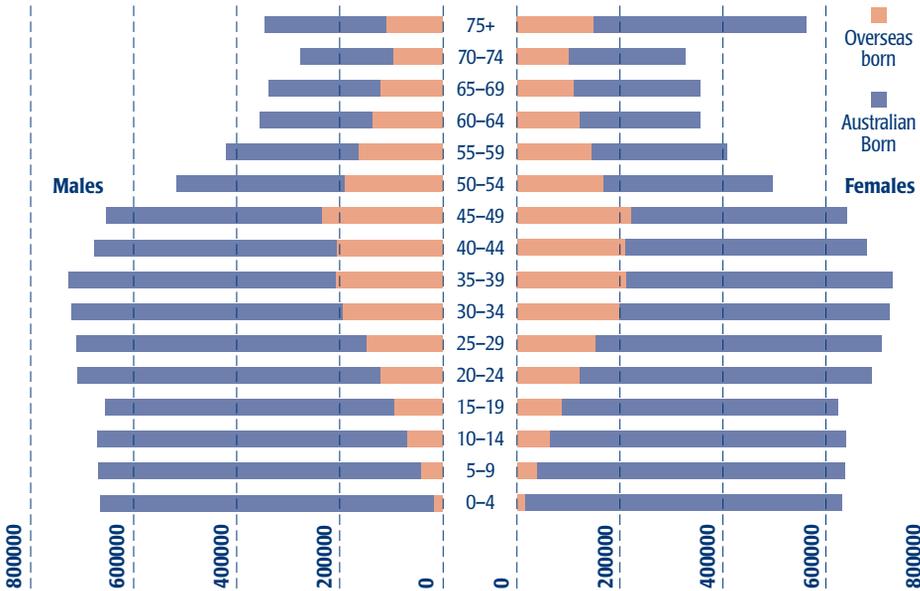
As in many other countries, Australia's population has been ageing. The median age of the population increased from 30.7 years in 1947 to 34.3 years in 1997. Over this period the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased from 8.0% to 12.1%.

Figure 3: Age-sex distribution of population, Australia, 1947



Source: Census of Population and Housing.

Figure 4: Age-sex distribution of population, Australia, 1996



Source: ERP by sex and age (Cat. no. 3201.0), and unpublished data.

Settlers from overseas have slowed the ageing of the population since their age profile, at their time of arrival, has generally been younger than that of the Australian population. However, the age profiles of people from particular countries vary substantially, reflecting their different periods of arrival in Australia. In 1996, the overseas-born population was older (median age of 44 years) than the Australian-born population (median age of 30 years).

Prior to 1979, Australia's population had more males than females, but this difference reversed in 1979. In 1996, there were 99 males to 100 females, but among older persons aged 65 years and over there were 77 men per 100 women. The overseas-born population had an excess of males (105 males to 100 females) in 1986, but in 1996 this excess had fallen to 102.

Population distribution

Australia's population is unevenly distributed across its six States and two Territories. In 1996, just over three-quarters of the population lived in the eastern seaboard States (New South Wales 34%, Victoria 25% and Queensland 18%). Settlers tend to settle in the most populous States and the largest cities, mainly due to the availability of employment opportunities, infrastructure support (friends and other family members already settled in the area), and other reasons such as climate and health. The postwar settlement pattern of migrants, together with internal migration and slight variations in rates of natural increase across the States/Territories, have resulted in a slight decline in the percentage of the population of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, and a corresponding increase in the share of the population of Queensland, Western Australia

and, to some extent, that of the Australian Capital Territory. The interstate movements of people have had a major influence on the distribution of the population across the States and Territories. During 1991-96, nearly 1.6 million people aged five years and over (8.9% of total population) changed their State or Territory of usual residence. This transfer provided a net gain of population to two States, Queensland (145,000 people) and Western Australia (17,300 people), and a net loss to all other States and Territories. In terms of the absolute numbers, however, the 1991 and 1996 census show that the population of each State and Territory rose. Since 1996 the population of Tasmania has declined slightly.

While all the States and Territories received a share of the overseas-born, some have a higher proportion than others. New South Wales (24%), Victoria (25%), Western Australia (29%), and the Australian Capital Territory (24%) had higher shares, while Tasmania (with 11% of its population born in other countries) had the lowest share.

1.2 POLICY EVOLUTION

Among the most profound changes in Australia over the past half century has been the evolution in public policy from the White Australia Policy to a non-discriminatory immigration policy, with the parallel transition from *assimilation* to *integration* and then to *multiculturalism*.

Assimilation

The policy of assimilation spans the period up to the mid 1960s and was based on a belief in the benefits of homogeneity and a vision of Australia as

a racially pure white nation. The policy effectively excluded non-European immigration. The preference over most of this period was for British migrants. However, as Australia's demand for migrants grew beyond the supply from Britain, other Europeans were accepted on the understanding that they would shed their cultures and languages and be assimilated into the host population so that they would rapidly become indistinguishable from it.

By the late 1950s, however, the then Minister for Immigration (Alexander Downer Snr) was prepared to acknowledge that, even though the preference for British migrants remained, 'Australia has received enormous benefits from the several hundred thousand migrants who have come here from Western Europe. Indeed, without them we could never have achieved so much in so little time'. Mr Downer was talking of the Snowy Mountains scheme, expansion of the steel and manufacturing industries and other sectors of the economy as the areas in which Australia had benefited from migrants from Western Europe.

He also acknowledged the 'precious infusion of ideas from the Continent' and 'new ways of living'. While there were still concerns about the homogeneity of Australian society, Minister Downer's comments reflect an open appreciation of the positive contribution of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

During this period existing social structures, such as welfare, education, labour market and legal institutions, were not adapted to meet the needs of newly arriving migrants. From 1947, however, migrants were taught English at public expense, under the Adult

QUESTION AND ANSWER #1:

Is Australia being swamped by people of any particular origin?

No. Australia is, and will always be, Australian. Our culture is influenced by many other cultures, but is not being swamped by any of them.

Under our non-discriminatory immigration policy Australia draws migrants from around the world, and will continue to do so. What matters most is that these migrants meet the selection criteria set by Australia.

Some people say that Australia is being Asianised, but the facts do not support this claim. While recent years have seen an increase in the proportion of migrants from Asia, this merely reflects the increased interest from the region where there are many educated, skilled, employable and entrepreneurial applicants. Australia has also accepted refugees from Asia, although the source of refugees tends to reflect crises in different parts of the world. For example, in recent years the majority of refugees have come from the countries that previously formed Yugoslavia.

When we use the term 'Asian' we also need to be clear about whom we are referring to. Until 1991 the Australian Government used the United Nations' definition that included the countries of the Middle East as part of Asia. Since 1991 Australia has used the United States' definition that excludes the Middle East. Under either definition Asia is not a monolithic bloc, but comprises people from many national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic groups.

Currently about 5.4 per cent of the Australian population are Asian-born. Projections by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, based on current migration and growth patterns, estimate that the Asian-born population of Australia will rise to around 7.5 per cent in the year 2041. Of course, if one adds Australian-born children of Asian-born parents to Asian-born residents, then the combined percentage would be higher. However, in the Council's view, such a grouping would be inappropriate as it seems to label Australian-born children with their parents' origin rather than the country of their own birth, which is Australia. This runs the risk of classifying Australians according to their appearance which would be both offensive and dangerous as well as contrary to our democratic system which does not discriminate between Citizens or permanent residents on the basis of appearance, origin or parental origin. In particular, Australian-born children, whether their parents were born here or overseas, are all born equally into the Australian community. Australia's future will largely be in their hands.

Migrant Education (now English) Program, and the Immigration Department employed professional social workers from the 1950s until the 1980s.

The policy of assimilation also dominated the treatment of our indigenous population, the forceful adoption of indigenous children into white Australian families being just one example of assimilationist thinking.

Integration

The policy of integration represented a transitional phase from the policy of assimilation, which sought to impose a cultural uniformity on the Australian people based on the existing dominant culture, to the policy of multiculturalism, which acknowledges that cultural diversity is not only acceptable but a positive force for Australia.

Integration is not synonymous with assimilation. Assimilation implies almost total absorption into another linguistic and cultural group – an assimilated individual gives up his or her cultural identity. Integration, in the broad sense, does not imply minority cultures giving way totally to a dominant culture. Instead, they influence the dominant culture which is modified to some extent by the newer cultures. Integration, however, does not encourage ongoing cultural diversity – everyone is expected to adopt the integrated culture.

In March 1966, following a comprehensive review of policy regarding the migration of non-Europeans, the Government effectively ended the White Australia Policy by allowing the admission of well-qualified people from Asia (albeit in small numbers).

It also relaxed the criteria by which lawful residents in Australia, including non-Europeans, could qualify for Australian Citizenship.

Soon after announcing these changes, Immigration Minister Hubert Opperman said that the primary aim of Australia's immigration policy 'is a constantly developing community which is generally integrated, substantially harmonious and usefully industrious. Without prejudice to that primary aim, the policy and rules and procedures by which this aim is achieved cannot remain static and will be refined from time to time, as Australia grows and the world changes'.

The following speech made in February 1971 by the then Immigration Minister, Phillip Lynch, foreshadowed a further important shift in official policy. While he maintained a substantially integrationist position speaking out against 'undigested minorities', he also rejected 'mindless uniformity' and advocated measures 'to preserve and strengthen the cultural heritage of newcomers':

All our immigration and social policies are for our own decision in the light of our aims and response to our needs – as we assess them. They are now clearly and firmly based on the belief that all Australians want Australia to be an essentially cohesive society notable for political democracy, for the rule of law, for economic opportunity and social mobility, without self-perpetuating enclaves and undigested minorities.

By undigested minorities I mean substantial groups of ethnic origin very different from the host community; proud of that difference and determined to perpetuate it; seeking to discourage inter-marriage; desiring to have separate political representation; and ready to dispute the efforts of the national government to encourage integration.

... At the same time I am not advocating mindless uniformity. No one wishes every Australian to conform to an identical pattern of life or culture. Most of us welcome variety in our developing national identity ... The English language should be a common link used in primary and secondary education throughout the country whether in State or independent schools. But measures must also be taken to preserve and strengthen the cultural heritage of newcomers so as to enrich and develop the sensitivity of the resulting new community.

Although the final vestiges of the White Australia Policy were not eliminated until 1973, with the formal adoption of a non-discriminatory immigration policy, these statements represented an important shift, not just from the 'assimilation' policy, but, although only partially, even from the 'integration' model. On the other hand, the statements also show how far we have come since in the acceptance and even celebration of cultural diversity, which the subsequent policy of multiculturalism represents.

Among other things, the integration policy began to acknowledge that large numbers of migrants, especially those whose

first language was not English, were experiencing many hardships as they settled into life in Australia. The highest priority was seen to be English language tuition (which had been provided since 1947) and labour market assistance, especially the recognition of overseas qualifications. Rather than introduce new or different programs, however, governments tended to look to ethnic organisations to assist the process of resettlement through self-help programs.

In July 1973 the Immigration Advisory Council's Committee on Social Patterns presented its report to government on its *Inquiry into the Departure of Settlers from Australia*. The Committee had been established in response to concerns that too many migrants were leaving Australia, thus undermining the purpose of our immigration program – and reflecting societal problems within Australia. The report found that, over the previous ten years, 'there has been a steady drift away from each batch of settler arrivals such that nearly 22 per cent have left permanently by the end of the sixth year and nearly 28 per cent by the end of the tenth'.

The Committee found that, while 'departures generally result from a complex of factors ... many problems encountered by migrants cannot be seen separately from those of the community as a whole'. The Committee recommended that 'remedial action should concentrate on migrants whose departure could be averted by government or community action rather than on the large proportion whose primary reason for leaving has nothing to do with dissatisfaction with Australia'.

The remedial action proposed by the Committee included the development of a range of settlement services.

It can be seen, then, that the decade from the mid 1960s is marked by an increasing awareness of the special needs of migrants and a growing recognition that a homogeneous society was neither possible or desirable.

Multiculturalism

By 1973, the term 'multiculturalism' had been introduced. The term originated in Canada, where it referred to the 1971 Trudeau Government's official programs of cultural maintenance. The official Canadian policy was called 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework', and arose in response to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1963–1969.

The Australian origins of the public policy of multiculturalism are quite different from Canada's. They are found in a range of critiques of Australian society in the late 1960s and early 1970s that were concerned with issues of equity.

Prominent among these was Professor Ronald Henderson's poverty survey in 1970. Several universities also conducted studies at this time that highlighted social equity problems, including those facing migrants. The work of Jerzy Zubrzycki at the Australian National University and Jean Martin at La Trobe University was particularly significant in this early period. The influence of Sir Peter Heydon, then Secretary of the Department of Immigration, was also crucial to the early evolution of multiculturalism.

In May 1973 Immigration Minister Grassby embraced cultural diversity, saying:

First, we must strengthen and develop the things which unite us as a community and as a nation. We must also identify, isolate and overcome those things which could divide us. This in no sense involves abandonment of the past. Rather we should seek to share our different heritages ... We have been a nation of exiles in our own land – all of us – for too long. It is time for the people of Australia to come home in a spiritual sense, to feel truly that we belong to this land, to see it as a heritage to be preserved and enhanced. It is my hope and purpose to see a strong and united Australian nation, a nation drawing upon the rich diversity of its people and its own unique resources to create a new sense of national unity and purpose. This is the time for decisive action. This is the decade in which we must make effective the concept of a family of the nation strong in its diversity.

In October 1975 the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Fraser, made speeches demonstrating for the first time that multiculturalism was becoming a major political priority on both sides of politics. At a ceremony proclaiming the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, Mr Whitlam referred to Australia as a 'multicultural nation', and Mr Fraser said in a speech to a Greek community ball: 'We ... are committed to encouraging and supporting diversity in our multicultural society'.

In August 1977 the first formal public policy of Australian multiculturalism was defined in the ***Australia as a Multicultural Society*** report by the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (Chairman: J Zubrzycki – see Appendix C for further details). In November 1981 Prime Minister Fraser described the underlying principles and approach to multiculturalism as:

Multiculturalism is about diversity, not division – it is about direction, not isolation. It is about cultural and ethnic difference, set within a framework of shared fundamental values which enable them to coexist on a complementary rather than a competitive basis. It involves respect for the law and for our democratic institutions and processes. Insisting on a core area of common values is no threat to multiculturalism but its guarantee, for it provides the minimal conditions on which the wellbeing of all is seated. Not least, multiculturalism is about equality of opportunity for the members of all groups to participate in and benefit from Australia’s social, economic and political life. This concern with equality of opportunity is dictated by both morality and hardnosed realism. I am talking about basic human rights ... No society can long retain a commitment and involvement of groups that are denied these rights.

From these beginnings, the adjective ‘multicultural’ has been increasingly used to describe the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Australia. The noun ‘multiculturalism’ has been used to describe our positive acceptance of the

reality and significance of our cultural diversity and the proactive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from it.

Multiculturalism continues the strong emphasis of previous policies on social harmony but recognises and positively accepts that Australia is, and will remain, a culturally diverse country; and it offers a set of guidelines for enhancing social harmony. It seeks to ensure that diversity is a positive force in our society and recognises that the absorption of newly arrived people into the Australian community necessarily involves all sectors of the community making some adjustments. There are many aspects of the Australian way of life that newcomers are required to accept. These include the law, our democratic form of government, and English as the national language. But, equally, Australian multiculturalism recognises that many migrants and their children will choose to retain many of their customs and cultural traditions, some of which will be adopted by other Australians.

In other words, the inclusion and participation of migrants and their descendants in Australian life occurs naturally and, within the bounds of our democratic and legal framework, the individual whether migrant or Australian-born must be free to choose which customs to retain and which to adopt.

Settlement and multicultural strategies

The evolution over the past fifty years in migrant selection and settlement strategies has had a profound impact on Australian

society. The receiving community has progressively become more and more diverse and the need for strategies to address the issues raised by this diversity has become more and more apparent. In recent decades these strategies, along with the settlement strategies, have both been called multiculturalism. It is evident from submissions received by the Council that this duality is causing some confusion in the minds of people and is responsible for some of the negative feelings about multiculturalism.

The Council firmly believes, therefore, that it is now appropriate to draw a clear conceptual distinction between settlement and multicultural strategies. While the former are a consequence of immigration, the latter embrace issues that arise from our cultural diversity irrespective of the size or nature of our immigration program.

It is certainly true that settlement services are quite consistent with the overall principles of multiculturalism, and the Council fully endorses the continuation of Commonwealth-funded settlement programs which should take into account the cultural diversity that has resulted from our non-discriminatory immigration program. They are designed to meet the needs of recently arrived migrants, regardless of source country, to enable them to participate fully in our society. This includes the need to find somewhere to live, find employment, engage in business, learn to speak and read English if they do not already, and enrol their children in school. Settlement programs also help migrants to find out about their new environment – what is expected of

them, what services are available, how the government and community operates.

Settlement programs are only available to eligible migrants. These programs are deliberately and appropriately selective – just as industry assistance programs are available only to selected industries or even firms within an industry, drought relief is available only to farmers, indigenous programs are only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and so on – but the benefits eventually flow to the entire community.

Australia is, and will always be, a multicultural society, irrespective of our future immigration intake. The special needs and opportunities presented by this ongoing cultural diversity will continue to require the proactive strategies, policies and programs that are appropriately attributed to multiculturalism. The Council therefore considers it to be essential that multiculturalism continues to be developed as an important and distinct priority, in addition to the continuation of settlement programs designed to accommodate the settlement requirements of new migrants.

Refugee resettlement

An important component of Australia's immigrant population has entered under the humanitarian program. This is the program in which Australia accepts refugees and other people who have suffered human rights abuse, and have often left their homes and countries.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international agency charged with protecting refugees, identifies people

National Agenda goals and principles

The *National Agenda* accepted as its underlying principles the eight goals proposed by the Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs in 1988. They are that:

- All Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia and share responsibility for furthering our national interests.
- All Australians should be able to enjoy the basic right of freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or culture.
- All Australians should enjoy equal life chances and have equitable access to and equitable share of the resources which governments manage on behalf of the community.
- All Australians should have the opportunity fully to participate in society and in the decisions which directly affect them.
- All Australians should be able to develop and make use of their potential for Australia's economic and social development.
- All Australians should have the opportunity to acquire and develop proficiency in English and languages other than English, and to develop cross-cultural understanding.
- All Australians should be able to develop and share their cultural heritage.
- Australian institutions should acknowledge, reflect and respond to the cultural diversity of the Australian community.

The *National Agenda* **further refined these goals** into a definition based on

three rights (expressed as dimensions) and three limits (based on obligations).

The **rights** are:

- cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth;
- economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

The **limits** are:

- multicultural policies are based upon the premise that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost;
- multicultural policies require all Australians to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society – the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, and equality of the sexes;
- multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights: the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values.

for whom resettlement may be the only appropriate solution to their plight. Through the humanitarian program, Australia is committed to playing a compassionate role in providing assistance to refugees and other victims of human rights abuses worldwide. Australia has the proud record of having one of the highest per capita refugee resettlement programs in the world. Because the location of crises which result in people becoming refugees can occur anywhere in the world, our humanitarian program contributes further to the cultural diversity of Australia. The Council strongly endorses Australia's generous and compassionate acceptance of refugees and believes this should continue as a moral responsibility and on a non-discriminatory basis. It also welcomes the appointment of the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC) in the Immigration and Multicultural Affairs portfolio. The Council initiated discussions with RRAC and has a productive working relationship with it.

Key immigration, settlement and multicultural reports

Successive Commonwealth governments have commissioned numerous reports over the past twenty-five years to advise on immigration, settlement and multicultural strategies. While the specifics of the reports vary considerably, they all address essentially similar broad issues: the settlement needs of migrants; and the social and economic consequences of cultural diversity in Australia. The Council considers these same broad issues to be relevant today, and for the foreseeable future.

A brief summary of a number of the most significant of these reports is at Appendix C.

1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia

The 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* is a landmark report in Australia's response to issues raised by the rapid increase in cultural diversity resulting from the arrival of large numbers of migrants from all over the world. Building on the work that preceded it, the *National Agenda* established the existing policy framework and has had bipartisan political support since its release and, based on the public submissions received by the Council, retains a high degree of public support today.

1.3 PROGRESS

Commonwealth initiatives: changing emphases

The Commonwealth Government and Public Service were early to adopt the recommendations of the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*. While this commitment has continued during the 1990s, there has been a gradual shift in the emphases of policies and programs in support of each of the three dimensions of multicultural policy articulated in the *National Agenda* – cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency. This evolution is continuing.

The emphasis of the **cultural identity** programs has moved from mainly helping ethnic communities to maintain their cultural practices to encouraging all Australians to understand each other better and to share their diverse heritage. This responds to the objective of the *National Agenda* 'to encourage different cultural groups to share their distinctive heritage with their fellow

Australians, and to encourage the mainstream of society to facilitate the expression of this diverse heritage’.

Initiatives have included: university and TAFE courses on cultural diversity, cross-cultural training programs and the introduction of workplace diversity plans by business and government; support for cultural activities, for example, grants for festivals and arts initiatives, directed to ethnic and wider community groups; community language programs; and programs in support of equal opportunity, tolerance, understanding of cultural differences and mutual respect.

Public sector programs under the **social justice** area of multicultural policy initially placed most emphasis on the rights of clients and how to help them overcome the language and cultural barriers they faced when seeking services or entitlements. More recently the emphasis has been on practical measures by service providers to address the needs of clients from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This new perspective is reflected in changes to the access and equity strategy. In 1996 the strategy was refocussed as a *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. The main focus of the Charter is the acceptance that a diverse clientele has diverse needs and that service providers ought to be aware of these needs, and act on this awareness. The aim is to cater for the needs of all clients in an open, non-discriminatory way.

The *Charter* was developed in consultation with, and has been adopted by, all State, Territory and Local Governments and represents a nationally consistent approach to government service delivery.

The **economic efficiency** area of multicultural policy initially concentrated on redressing the disadvantages that many migrants face in the workplace. This included improved processes to help migrant workers to gain recognition of their overseas qualifications and skills, the provision of English language training, and a variety of workplace programs designed to assist them to better understand and assert their rights.

Such programs continue, and are essential to enable all Australians to participate and contribute to our society to their full potential. In the early 1990s, however, another aspect of economic efficiency that began receiving public policy emphasis was the promotion of the economic benefits that can be gained by capitalising on Australia’s wealth of cultural and linguistic skills and on the social and business networks of migrants in the Australian community. The profile of Australia’s population now reflects the diversity of the whole world, and this has positioned Australia to succeed in the global marketplace by using our multicultural assets. Under the banner of productive diversity, a term adopted in 1992, the Commonwealth has implemented a number of initiatives promoting the economic benefits that can be derived from our cultural diversity in both the domestic and international markets.

State and Territory commitment to multiculturalism

All State and Territory governments have adopted multicultural policies and each has established a government body that addresses multicultural and ethnic

issues (see Appendix D for details). Their commitment is evident in pledges, policies and programs that have a number of common themes, including:

- the right of all individuals to maintain and foster their cultural identity;
- recognition of the advantages in effectively harnessing the linguistic and other resources of the culturally diverse community for the economic benefit of the State or Territory;
- a commitment that Government and community structures give equal access to people from non-English-speaking countries to enable them to enjoy and fully participate in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the State or Territory;
- a commitment to the elimination of racism and prejudice, and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, religion and ethnic background;
- a commitment to ensure that the needs of migrants, particularly those from non-English-speaking countries, are taken into account in the formulation of policies and the provision of services and programs.

State and Territory educational institutions offer many courses that address cultural diversity. They provide students with an understanding of and respect for cultural heritage, reflecting a widely held recognition of the need to communicate across cultural lines.

Everyday life

Diversity is also accepted as part of everyday life by Australians and is

widely viewed as very positive. The submissions received through the Council's consultative process also reflected the fact that many Australians routinely enjoy a very wide range of cultural activities and diverse cuisine.

Research shows that Australians take pride in the cosmopolitan nature of our society today, a society in which many customs retain the essence of their diverse ethnic origins, though sometimes influenced by the Australian environment. The result is distinctly Australian.

The Council's consultations reveal that there is wide acceptance of the everyday benefits of cultural diversity, but that we should now move beyond notions of food and dance. Benefits in areas such as trade and investment, scholarship and research, diplomacy and international collaboration, sports and leisure, hospitality and tourism, and all aspects of the arts should also be highlighted.

Youth

To many young Australians, cultural diversity is the norm. It is what they have grown up with. A very interesting insight into the thinking of young Australians is found in the 1998 report of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Young people speak about Identity and Australia's Cultural Makeup*. The report analyses the 7,000 responses to the Commission's *If I could make a difference* postcard campaign, which asked Years 10 and 11 students to complete the thoughts, *If I could make a difference I'd ...* and *Being Australian means ...*

The report sees the responses as the voice of a new generation which has experienced a different kind of world to any previous generation in Australian history. What these young Australians say indicates the emergence of a new attitude regarding what is normal in Australia. They do not see multiculturalism or ethical ideas such as antiracism as some form of unwarranted 'political correctness' that is imposed by 'cultural elites', but as a very ordinary and practical part of everyday experience.

Time for review

During the past fifty years Australia has undergone an enormous amount of change as it has adjusted to the forces of technology and globalisation by becoming a more open and less insular economy and society. Large-scale immigration has added significantly to Australia's population, and the replacement of the White Australia Policy by a non-discriminatory approach has resulted in a great and visible increase in the cultural diversity of the community. The floating of the dollar, the dismantling of tariff barriers and the development of new global trading regimes and associations have together changed the economic face of Australia, with new industries developing while traditional ones have declined. In turn, there have been massive changes to the labour market, including an increase in unemployment, a move to part-time work, the obsolescence of old skills, a shortage of skills required by new industries and the relocation of job opportunities. All of these have led to an increase in anxiety and feelings of insecurity.

The changes Australia has experienced in recent decades have had major, but

differentiated, impacts on all sectors of Australian society. While most Australians have benefited, some may see the world changing and moving too quickly, threatening their employment and wellbeing and even the values upon which their lives have been built, values that are so important for their self-identification as Australians. Such concerns are felt by numerous people across both urban and rural Australia, although its intensity and the percentage of the population that is affected varies from place to place.

These feelings of alienation have given impetus to a search for scapegoats. For a portion of the community, multiculturalism has become one of the scapegoats. As a result we have seen a growth in criticism of multiculturalism, including the emergence of political parties that have sought to exploit community concern by advocating thinly veiled policies of bigotry and division.

The Council believes that it is not possible for Australia to insulate itself completely from global change and the effects of globalisation, nor would it be appropriate to do so. The global economy offers many opportunities which can be of significant benefit to all Australians. Our culturally diverse society has the special skills and relationships needed to take full advantage of many of these opportunities.

The Council believes that multicultural policies have served Australia very well, contributing to a fairer and more just society. Australia, with all its diversity, remains a cohesive and harmonious society and cultural diversity has contributed significantly to its economic, cultural and social sophistication.

Like all areas of public policy, however, multicultural strategies need to be continually reviewed and updated in the context of the changes in our society and our relationship with the global community. Such a review is particularly relevant now, since Australian multiculturalism has evolved beyond its origins, where most of the focus was on post-arrival settlement programs, to an issue of importance to the whole community, vital to our sense of ourselves as Australians. A review is also appropriate in light of the heightened debate over the past few years on the pros and cons of Australian multiculturalism, on whether it should continue and, if so, in what form. The Council has undertaken such a review not only through its own deliberations but has also taken into account a wealth of input from widespread consultations, submissions to the Council's Issues Paper *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward*, relevant literature and commissioned research and reports. This report contains the Council's recommendations arising out of the review.

2.1 THE CONTINUING IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURALISM

The Council supports the view that an important measure by which a civilisation should be judged is its treatment of minorities. It could be argued that the welcome and assistance Australia's governments and people have given to new settlers, including refugees, reflect our commitment to such a principle: because it is the right thing to do and because the values of justice and equity are deeply embedded in our democratic principles. These new settlers, in return, have contributed greatly to Australian society, often in the face of major difficulties. The combined goodwill of all has been crucial in the evolution of our harmonious multicultural society which is a major achievement of Australian democracy.

The dramatic changes in the ethnic and cultural composition of Australia that have occurred in the space of the most recent one and a half generations are equivalent in magnitude to those wrought in Canada over three generations, and over more than six generations in the United States. Moreover, this transformation has occurred with a high level of tolerance and good humour, and without serious rancour. By any measure, Australia is a very successful multicultural society, and has frequently drawn praise both domestically and overseas as a model of such a society.

A wide range of multicultural policies and programs have been enacted over the past twenty-five years and Australia's social, administrative and legal infrastructure has adjusted to the needs and potential of an increasingly diverse community.

Some programs have been initiated by the Commonwealth Government, others by State, Territory and Local Governments. The education sector, business and unions have also contributed. Much has happened among social, cultural and religious groups and in the wider community because most people have become comfortable with the fact that their daily lives now routinely involve meeting and dealing with people from different backgrounds. The continuing social harmony of our community owes much to these combined efforts.

Australian society is built upon a comprehensive social infrastructure of laws, institutions and traditions. While many of the core elements have been in place for over a century, it has evolved considerably in recent decades, and continues to evolve.

Government involvement in the development of Australia started from the beginning of permanent European settlement. The lack of private capital saw, for instance, the colonial governments build railways, open banks and provide support to industry.

In the twentieth century, governments have continued to make massive investments in infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, power generation, water supply, airlines, telecommunications and many other aspects of our economy. But, equally importantly, Australian governments have long provided social welfare services and funding as an expression of the Australian ethos of justice.

Many government instrumentalities have been, or are now being, privatised. But, whether in the private or public

sector, Australia's social infrastructure continues to be among the fairest and most comprehensive in the world. It is clearly for the whole community and, subject to the eligibility criteria of the particular programs, provides us all with services and financial support. These include: subsidies to industry; drought relief to farmers; income support to the needy; medical help for the sick; education for our children; and much more. Similarly, it is also our social infrastructure that provides a range of settlement services for migrants – again subject to the various eligibility criteria of the programs.

Government policy and expenditure are also used to deliver benefits to particular segments of the community. For instance, public funds provide a wide range of allowances and rebates to individual and corporate taxpayers; telecommunications and postal costs are equalised for the whole community; roads, bridges and other parts of the physical infrastructure are built and repaired; and a whole range of commercial activities is regulated for the public good. While this directly benefits some individuals and groups more than others, it is justified on both equity and efficiency grounds.

Multicultural policy has a direct interest in ensuring that all government programs are alert to the issues that arise because of our cultural diversity. Such issues, therefore, must be considered in the design and delivery of the vast majority of programs that operate under our social infrastructure. The Council notes that, while a great deal of progress has been made in recent decades in adapting this infrastructure

so that it can better meet the needs of Australia's multicultural population, this effort needs to be maintained as a priority and continually updated to address changing requirements.

Many Australians and institutions of our society have undergone major attitudinal changes – from seeing diversity as a problem to recognising it as a defining characteristic of modern Australia and appreciating its benefits. This transition is, however, incomplete. This is why the major focus of this report is on achieving a more inclusive phase of multiculturalism that seeks to embrace and be embraced by all Australians, and highlights and seeks to maximise the dividends of our diversity.

The 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* stated that 'the challenges of a multicultural society do not simply resolve themselves. Government action – in the form of multicultural policies – is needed in certain areas to promote social harmony, to ensure a fair go and to harness our human resources in the most productive way for Australia's future'. The Council believes this is as valid today as then. Australia is, and will always be, a multicultural society, irrespective of our immigration intake, and multiculturalism remains an important means of addressing the challenges and opportunities of our cultural diversity.

For all the reasons detailed above, the Council **recommends** continued government support for Australian multiculturalism as a fundamental requirement and opportunity arising out of the cultural diversity of Australian society, and that this commitment be reflected in all government policies.

2.2 THE MEANING OF MULTICULTURALISM

The Council's terms of reference require it to consider issues raised by the terminology of multicultural policy, of which the terms 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism' are the most important.⁴ This is an important matter because the words used, and the way they are used, when discussing issues of race, ethnicity and culture, have a major impact on the way these issues are understood and on community attitudes to them.

The adjective 'multicultural' is frequently used to mean 'multi-ethnic' or 'culturally diverse', and there would appear to be little disagreement in the community that this is an appropriate word to describe Australian society.

The Council is, however, aware that the noun 'multiculturalism', which denotes an active public policy, appears to generate stronger reactions, both positive and negative, than the adjective 'multicultural'. Among the questions asked in the Council's Issues Paper *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward* was: 'Is multiculturalism an appropriate term to describe a policy for managing cultural diversity, or has it outlived its usefulness? If the latter, what alternative term would you suggest?'

The answers provided were quite polarised and some submissions reflected a major misunderstanding of the meaning of the term 'multiculturalism' as it is used in public policy. Most saw it positively, as a

policy that delivers significant benefits to Australia and is needed to ensure justice and equity for all Australians. On the other hand, some submissions suggested that multiculturalism applies only to migrants from a non-English-speaking background and seems to deny Australian culture. A number criticised what they perceived as overemphasis on the rights of particular groups without stressing their corresponding obligations. A few went so far as to say that multiculturalism influences the scale of the immigration program and the ethnic origin of migrants, and is threatening community harmony in Australia. There is also a perception that certain people are able to escape criticism about their views or behaviour because of their ethnicity or background.

Further, those who had a problem with the term also tended to question the value and criticise the content of multicultural policy, while those who supported the continuing use of the term tended to support the policy. Accordingly, the Council believes that changing the name of the policy may not necessarily result in greater acceptance of it. Those who oppose multiculturalism would probably continue to oppose it under a different name.

Alternative terms that have been suggested include: diversity; cultural diversity; human diversity; unity in diversity; Australia's diverse culture; multicultural citizenship; or cosmopolitan Australia.

It has also been suggested that 'multiculturalism' could be used in conjunction with a slogan, such as: One People, Many Cultures; Many Peoples, One Australia; Many Peoples, One Community;

4 Issues raised by the terminology of multicultural policy are covered throughout this report. See Appendix E for information.

All for Australia; or For All Australians –
Developing our New Nationhood.

Having considered the above suggestions, the Council believes, however, that the term ‘multiculturalism’ has served the Australian community well and best describes our positive acceptance of the reality and significance of our cultural diversity and the proactive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from it. The Council also notes that opinion polls indicate a high level of support for multiculturalism.⁵ While the term has drawn criticism from some segments of the community, and this is reflected in some of the submissions the Council has received, the Council believes there is no alternative noun that would work better. Also, any alternative term would soon attract similar criticism from those critical of the term or policy of multiculturalism. For all these reasons the Council **recommends** the retention of the term ‘multiculturalism’. Further, in order to recognise that our implementation of multiculturalism is unique and reflects Australia’s diverse heritage, history, democracy, culture and identity, it **recommends** that the prefix ‘Australian’ be used whenever appropriate.

The Council acknowledges the challenge arising from the wide differences in understanding of the meaning of the term ‘multiculturalism’, particularly between those who are positive and those who are negative about multicultural policy. The Council believes that to achieve the objective set out in its terms of reference

of ‘ensuring that cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia’, it is essential that there is clarity in the understanding and use of the term ‘multiculturalism’.

The Council therefore **recommends** the adoption of the following definition of multiculturalism:

Australian multiculturalism is a term which recognises and celebrates Australia’s cultural diversity. It accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures and values of Australian democracy. It also refers to the strategies, policies and programs that are designed to:

- *make our administrative, social and economic infrastructure more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of our culturally diverse population;*
- *promote social harmony among the different cultural groups in our society;*
- *optimise the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians.*

While Australian multiculturalism values and celebrates diversity, it is not an ‘anything goes’ concept since it is built on core societal values of mutual respect, tolerance and harmony, the rule of law and our democratic principles and institutions. It is also based on an overriding commitment to Australia.

⁵ See Question and Answer box #2, page 37

The Council **recommends** that the above definition of Australian multiculturalism be clearly explained through a communication strategy that is designed to reach as many individuals and groups of the Australian community as possible.

QUESTION AND ANSWER: #2

How many Australians support multiculturalism?⁶

Opinion polls indicate a high degree of support for Australian multiculturalism. In a June 1996 survey by AGB McNair, 61% of people agreed with multiculturalism, defined by McNair as – ‘encouraging migrants to become Australians without having to give up their own culture’.

In a November 1996 AGB McNair survey, 70% disagreed with the proposition that multiculturalism should be abolished.

An April 1997 survey by Newspoll asked if multiculturalism had been good or bad. 78% said it had been good (41% said ‘very good’ and 37% said ‘somewhat good’. 10% said ‘somewhat bad’ and only 6% said ‘very bad’. The other 6% were ‘uncommitted’.)

⁶ For a more detailed picture about trends in Public Opinion about Immigration, Multiculturalism and Related Matters, see a report prepared by Dr Murray Goot, Professor of Politics at Macquarie University for the Council. The report is available from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, or through its web site: <http://www.immi.gov.au>

2.3 A VISION FOR AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM

The Council is confident that the great diversity of skills and talents of the Australian people, and the strength of our democratic system and the principles and values that underpin it, will ensure that our culturally diverse community achieves success through all its members working together towards a common vision. The Council **recommends** the adoption of the following vision for Australian multiculturalism:

A united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity.

This vision builds upon the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996 that:

‘this House:

- reaffirms its commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin;
- reaffirms its commitment to maintaining an immigration policy wholly non-discriminatory on grounds of race, colour, creed or origin;
- reaffirms its commitment to the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in the context of redressing their profound social and economic disadvantage;

-
- reaffirms its commitment to maintain Australia as a culturally diverse, tolerant and open society, united by an overriding commitment to our nation, and its democratic institutions and values;
 - denounces racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to be.

Its essence is that it gives priority to the unity and wellbeing of the Australian community as a total entity. It sees all members of our society:

- valuing and celebrating the diversity of the culture that we all inherit, contribute to and share;
- working together in harmony to continually develop, on the foundations of our democracy, our common identity as 'citizens' of the multicultural Australian nation.

The Council sees this vision as the ultimate goal and guiding rationale for multicultural policies and the most viable option we must pursue as a nation if we are to maximise the dividends of our diversity, while continuing to avoid the serious communal disharmony that has weakened many other pluralistic societies.

At the heart of the vision is the moral challenge of living together in a united community, as people sharing core values and sustaining a harmonious society, while at the same time celebrating our diversity. At a time when much public discussion is about self-interest and individual rights, the Council considers there is a need for Australian multiculturalism to give due

emphasis to the national interest and community obligations.

The Council believes that, provided Australian multiculturalism pursues this vision, we can be confident that our cultural diversity will not be divisive but will instead be a unifying force for all Australians.

2.4 MULTICULTURALISM AND AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY

The democratic roots of Australian multiculturalism

The Council starts from the proposition that Australian multiculturalism has been built on our free democratic system. Australian democracy guarantees us our freedom, our basic human rights and our fundamental equalities. Likewise, Australian democracy requires our loyalty and our commitment to the basic structures and principles of our society.

The democratic foundations of our society contain a balance of rights and obligations: the basic structures and principles of Australian democracy make us a free society, but our freedom in practice is dependent upon our abiding by our mutual civic obligations; as Australians we have equal rights and equal obligations but, while all Australians have a right to expect equal opportunities, our society does not guarantee equal outcomes; and we owe loyalty to Australia, whose laws, institutions and traditions guarantee our basic human rights.

This is a constitutive principle of our nation that is of fundamental importance to the development of Australian multiculturalism. Not only has our democracy evolved in such

a way as to give rise to multiculturalism, but our democratic institutions and traditions also provide the foundation and framework that enable diversity in many forms to flourish in our society.

Some implications flow from this: to recognise that it is the principles and structures of Australian society that guarantee us our basic rights and freedoms is to understand what binds us as a people; to accept that we have fundamental equalities and similarities as human beings and ‘citizens’ is to acknowledge that a generally harmonious community must be built on mutual respect; and given that the Australian population is racially, culturally and socially diverse, the proper functioning of our democratic society requires us to live constructively with this diversity.

Further, as individuals we share many concerns and goals, many of which are related to social harmony. The greater our understanding of the goals we share, the greater the prospects for social harmony; and the more complete the social harmony, the more likely our concerns will be allayed, leaving us freer to pursue our other goals.

Our democracy sees the challenges and opportunities confronting any Australian as arising from our common human condition and membership of the Australian community. It does not seek diversity in our society as an end in itself; rather it welcomes and values diversity as a great cultural, social and economic resource. And, while it exalts individual rights and obligations, one of the hallmarks of our society is its active and vibrant group life.

People from all walks of life belong to a variety of groups, and a pluralist democracy such as ours is enriched when people come together on the basis of their shared values and interests. Our democracy gives Australians the freedom to express their identity within multiple affiliations and according to a wide range of cherished traditions and customs. At the same time it seeks unity built on such moral values as respect of difference, tolerance and a commitment to freedom, and an overriding commitment to Australia’s national interests. This is what binds us in our diversity and makes us a political community.

Australians generally agree on the attributes of a harmonious society – justice, compassion, tolerance, cooperation, respect for individuality and a shared commitment to the common good. The Council believes that the best way to ensure that multicultural Australia continues to develop as an essentially harmonious society, for the good of all Australians, is to protect and strengthen our democratic values and institutions and to continue to build multicultural policies and programs on the foundation of our democratic system.

When Australia was founded on 1 January 1901, and the colonies became States in the Commonwealth of Australia, the foundations of our liberal democracy were well established, although the perspective of that time was very insular.

Since then Australia has progressively abandoned its structural insularity. The White Australia Policy has been abolished, the 1967 referendum began

the process of formal acknowledgement and recognition of our indigenous people, and many social and economic reforms have placed us in a good position to meet the challenges of a global economy. Throughout this period of enormous change, we have maintained our commitment to our democratic and egalitarian traditions. As we approach the Centenary of Federation, it is timely to remind ourselves that these traditions and structures remain in place, and are as strong as ever. They are core values on which our social infrastructure is built.

Multiculturalism and concepts of 'citizenship'

The Council believes that it is important to explore the relationship between multiculturalism and concepts of 'citizenship'. It believes there is a close and positive relationship between multiculturalism and the legal status of Australian Citizenship as well as the wider concept of 'citizenship' which refers to membership of the Australian community that is enjoyed by Australian Citizens and permanent residents.

Throughout this report the terms Australian Citizen and Australian Citizenship are used when referring to the legal status defined in the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*. The terms 'citizen' and 'citizenship' are used when referring to membership of the wider Australian community which is shared by Australian Citizens and permanent residents, and to the rights and obligations that flow from such membership including the desirable civic values of the community.

In its legal sense Australian Citizenship dates from 26 January 1949, when the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* came into force and the status of 'Australian Citizen' came into existence. Prior to this, people living in Australia (who were not 'aliens') were British subjects. Although Australia became a sovereign nation on 1 January 1901, the concept of nationhood for the first half of this century was closely linked to Australia's membership of the British Empire and British Commonwealth.

The establishment of Australian Citizenship was an important practical and symbolic step in the development of Australian nationhood. It provided a distinct status of being 'Australian' and a legal basis for full and formal membership of the Australian nation.

Australian Citizenship legislation is concerned mainly with the process of obtaining, losing and regaining Australian Citizenship and has not provided the substantive rights of Citizens, many of which are provided in the Constitution, other legislation and common law. Therefore it should be noted that, particularly in the case of indigenous people, the existence of Australian Citizenship status which they, along with all other Australian Citizens, acquired under the 1948 Act, did not at that time bring with it fully equal rights for all Citizens. Nevertheless, the status of Australian Citizenship has played an important part in helping to mould a harmonious society over the past 50 years. In the process, Citizenship policy and law have gradually changed and evolved

to reflect the changes in Australian society over that period.

In its early days, Australian Citizenship law gave preferential treatment to British subjects compared to aliens in the process of acquisition of Australian Citizenship but, over time, law and policy have evolved in a way which treats all newcomers to Australia equally, regardless of their origins. In addition, there has been an easing in the conditions for the acquisition of Australian Citizenship in order to provide maximum encouragement of permanent residents to formally become part of the Australian nation.

Since 1949 some 3.1 million migrants have taken the opportunity to acquire Australian Citizenship. Today, Australian Citizenship policy and law probably provide a more inclusive and welcoming environment than any Citizenship law elsewhere in the world.

Australian Citizenship has played an important unifying role in the development of Australia's nationhood and the modern multicultural society which has evolved with it.

The Council believes it is highly desirable for Australian permanent residents to acquire Australian Citizenship when they become eligible to do so, and **recommends** the active promotion of the benefits of Australian Citizenship to encourage its take-up. However, it must be recognised that permanent residents, who are not yet eligible for, or have not yet chosen to acquire Australian Citizenship, are nonetheless members of the Australian community and have all the rights and

obligations of Australian Citizens except those that arise exclusively from Australian Citizenship (see details at Appendix F).

An aspect of the debate of more direct interest to the Council is the relationship between 'citizenship' and multiculturalism. The combined phrase 'multicultural citizenship' has been used by some writers while others argue that, in the interests of greater unity, the concept of multiculturalism should give way to that of 'citizenship'.

In the Council's view, the concepts are interlinked but each is important in its own right. 'Citizenship' should be primarily seen as a bond or glue, consisting of shared membership in a political community – a commitment to the Constitution and the laws, the rights and obligations and the core values and practices of Australian democracy. This expanded idea of 'citizenship' does not negate the place and role of Australian multiculturalism as defined in this report. Instead, the Council sees the relationship between 'citizenship' and multiculturalism as symbiotic and complementary.

In fact, the reason Australian multiculturalism is able to make our diversity a great resource for all Australians is precisely because, at its core, are the same values that are embedded in the notion of 'citizenship', including respect of difference, tolerance and a commitment to freedom and equal opportunity. Nor does multiculturalism represent a threat to unity because, while our democracy gives all 'citizens' the freedom to retain cherished traditions and customs, it also requires an overriding commitment to Australia's national interests. Multiculturalism will also enhance unity

further as it develops the increased inclusiveness recommended in this report.

In recent years there has been considerable public discussion of the rights and obligations that flow from 'citizenship' or membership of the Australian community and the extent to which they should also be formally associated with the legal status of Australian Citizenship discussed above. The Council welcomes such discussion and believes that some formal description of the fundamental rights, obligations and core values of 'citizenship', for example, in a preamble to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*, could help promote unity within our diverse society. It would guide all 'citizens' of our community and not only those who are legally Australian Citizens. Public discussion can also inform the Australian Government whether there is any need to modify the rights and obligations that apply exclusively to Australian Citizens. The Council does not see any particular need for such modification at this time.

The Council notes that the Australian Citizenship Council has been established within the Immigration and Multicultural Affairs portfolio to provide advice on appropriate arrangements for celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Australian Citizenship. It is also required to present a report on 'contemporary issues in Australian Citizenship policy and law to be addressed as Australia moves into the next millennium; and how to promote increased community awareness of the significance of Australian Citizenship for all Australians, including its role as a unifying symbol'.

The Council believes that the issues relating to a formal statement of the basic rights, obligations and core values of 'citizenship' is more directly and properly written into the charter of the Australian Citizenship Council. We intend working closely with the Council as it develops its thinking in this important area.

Our input will stress that our obligations, like our rights, are not exhausted by our legal duties and entitlements. Some of our broader duties as 'citizens' are well captured by the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996 that reaffirmed the importance of maintaining Australia as a tolerant and open society, united by an overriding commitment to our nation and its democratic institutions and values, and that denounced racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to be.

We will also suggest that due attention be given to the numerous attempts in the past twenty years to articulate the core values and principles of Australian society. In these statements there is wide agreement that core Australian principles and values include, or are based on:

- commitment to Australia;
- freedom;
- a *fair go*;
- democracy;
- rule of law;
- tolerance;
- mutual respect
- political equality;
- equal opportunity;
- non-discrimination.

50 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

On 26 January 1999 Australian Citizenship was 50 years old.

On 26 January 1949 Australian Citizenship became a legal reality through the enactment of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*. Under the Act, while an Australian Citizen remained a British subject, Australian Citizenship laws and policy gradually became more inclusive with barriers progressively removed:

- in 1973 the title of the Act was changed to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* and in 1984 the Act was amended to remove the status of British subject from Australian Citizenship legislation;
- in 1984 the residential qualifying period was reduced to two years to encourage migrants to become Citizens as soon as possible after settling in Australia;
- Australia has moved from a position of requiring only aliens (not British or Irish Citizens) to affirm allegiance to the Crown, to a requirement that all

new Citizens, regardless of origin, take the oath or affirm their allegiance;

- new Citizens are no longer required to renounce all other foreign allegiances;
- nowadays, the Australian Citizenship Pledge, introduced in 1994, only asks that new Citizens pledge their loyalty to Australia and its people and promise to share their democratic beliefs, respect their rights and liberties, and uphold and obey the laws of Australia.

The *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* granted Australian Citizenship automatically to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who were either born after 26 January 1949 or were British subjects prior to that date. However, because of other legislation and/or social practices, such people did not gain all the rights attendant on Citizenship at that time.

Qualifications on their right to vote were removed in 1962, although it was not until 1984 that they were obliged to vote.

Civics education

The harmony of our culturally diverse community will be significantly enhanced if all Australians have a sound understanding of the values, principles and institutions of Australian democracy, the concepts of 'citizenship', multiculturalism and Australian Citizenship, and the rights, obligations and core values they contain.

The Council commends the work of the *Discovering Democracy* program

developed within the Education, Training and Youth Affairs portfolio, which supports civics and citizenship education in schools and other education sectors. The Council **recommends** that the program be used to reach as many Australians as possible. The Council intends providing input into the future development of this program to ensure that the cultural diversity of our society and its benefits as well as the meaning and value of multiculturalism receive appropriate emphasis.

QUESTION AND ANSWER: #3

Does multiculturalism promote social harmony?

Australia is a free and democratic society which values its diversity. Not only are our people racially and ethnically diverse, but we hold many different points of view on many and varied subjects. This is our right, but there are limits to our freedom. We all have to abide by the law, and the core values and standards of our society.

Multiculturalism is concerned with the acceptance of difference and freedom in relationships between culturally diverse individuals and groups in our society, and with how our society meets the needs and derives benefits from the contribution of its culturally diverse 'citizens'. It asks all Australians to positively accept that we are a very diverse society and, subject to the law, to recognise each other's rights to choose how they wish to live.

Diversity is a positive force in our society. Forced assimilation or the suppression of diversity would be a certain recipe for disharmony. Most people would agree that Australia, in all its diversity, is a cohesive, harmonious society. Multicultural strategies have been a significant contributing factor to this success, aiming to manage the consequences of this diversity in the interests of the individual and society as a whole. This is how Australian multiculturalism promotes social harmony.

A balance of rights and obligations

Australia's democratic structures contain a balance of rights and obligations that apply equally to all 'citizens'. This balance is exemplified by the acknowledgment in the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* that 'the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values'. These rights are, of course, also subject to the rule of law.

In practice, however, the implementation of multicultural policy has tended to focus more on the dimensions (rights) than on the limits (obligations) defined in the *National Agenda*, and understandably so, because this was more consistent with the priorities of that time. The Council believes that it is now appropriate to achieve a better balance by making it clear that Australia's democratic system confers rights and imposes obligations. In this regard multiculturalism simply draws upon and supports these principles of our democracy and seeks to ensure that the whole community accepts and understands that they apply equally to all Australians regardless of ethnic or cultural background.

In the Council's view, if our cultural diversity is to be a unifying force, the continuation of positive multicultural policies and programs that place a balanced emphasis on both our rights and obligations is essential. There is a need to give more prominence to the fact that all Australians have equal rights and equal obligations. This includes the Australian tradition of a reciprocal obligation between 'citizens' and Australian society that holds it to be fair for the community to

provide safety net support for any Australian in times of need, while expecting all members of the community to support and contribute to Australia's essential interests.

2.5 MULTICULTURALISM AND AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

It is difficult to precisely define the culture of any nation and it is no easier to define Australian culture. This is because culture is a composite of many ingredients and in any dynamic society is continually evolving. Also, the term 'culture' has many meanings. In its broadest sense, culture is often seen as a term that refers to the way of life of a society. In this sense it is the structures and traditions of Australia's democratic society, the customs and habits, the aspirations and values, and the individual and collective achievements of the Australian people, living within these democratic arrangements, that make up Australian culture. The record of Australian multiculturalism demonstrates a long and abiding interest in these matters, although the link to Australia's cultural traditions has not always been emphasised.

Australian society is built on the principles and institutions of our democracy and has been moulded by all the heritage of the past. But it is now much more diverse than it was fifty or a hundred years ago. Rather than being compromised by multiculturalism, it is broadened and enhanced and is the direct beneficiary of the diverse cultures that migrants have brought with them.

A strongly expressed view in some of the public submissions from respondents who claim 'Anglo' or 'old Australia' heritages

is that multiculturalism is a negative and divisive feature of Australian society, creating disdain for people of Anglo-Celtic origins and denigrating Australian culture by promoting other cultures as more worthy. They argue that this contributes to a general sense of unease and causes unacceptable levels of separateness in society. While acknowledging that the assimilationist policies of the past asked too much of migrants, these respondents criticised multiculturalism for asking too much of Australian-born people and not enough of migrants. The Council respects the people expressing these concerns but believes their views reflect an incorrect perception of multiculturalism, pointing to an important communication strategy priority.

Australian culture is dynamic. It starts with and retains its links to our total heritage, but is not a fossilised entity which remains static from the time a particular group sets foot on Australian soil. Rather, it is a living, changing and interacting set of life patterns. It has been modified and enhanced by the arrival of many migrant groups. It continues to be developed by the evolution of ideas and customs within Australia and by global influences. While the Australians of the 1890s would scarcely recognise many aspects of our society today, there is no doubt that they would still recognise the Australianness that has endured. Importantly, we must recognise that we are not alone in this as all societies have been through changes over this period, and none have been unaffected by either the nature or rate of such change.

The Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard MP, made a similar point in an interview in *The Australia/Israel Review* in May 1998:

Well, I think some people were offended by the suggestion that somehow or other we had no cultural identity until (we had) mass migration, postwar migration ... I think there's the idea that, somehow or other, until we had multiculturalism and a lot of ethnic diversity we really had no identifiable national marks... I take an evolutionary view. The character is constantly being remade in an evolutionary way over a period of time. I mean, there are still traits that you can recognise that were present there 40 or 50 years ago but some of them less so... things alter over a period of time and the identity is constantly evolving. But I think some people felt uncomfortable with it because of that sense that, we didn't really have an identifiable character until this came on to the scene. So I don't really have any problem with what comprises multiculturalism, in fact I am very strongly supportive of it. Very strongly.

The freedom that our democracy guarantees gives space for the cultural diversity in Australian society, so it is our democracy and our expectation that 'citizens' respect and adhere to its principles that are the key ingredients of a unifying Australian tradition which Australian multiculturalism retains.

This freedom includes the freedom to express and maintain one's cultural and artistic preferences. The Council does not, however, see cultural maintenance as

something aimed at simply maintaining a cultural status quo. Rather, it supports the dynamic notion of cultural maintenance contained in the submission from the Australia Council:

Cultural maintenance is important for everyone... It may well be that the meaning of 'maintenance' has sometimes been misunderstood. The Australia Council's *Arts for a Multicultural Australia* policy principles state that: 'The Australia Council upholds and promotes the engagement of all Australians in cultural maintenance through the promotion and practice of the arts, and promotes

QUESTION AND ANSWER: #4

Does multiculturalism mean that Australia no longer has its own identity?

No. Australia's identity and culture is very complex, and this has always been the case. There has never been an agreed definition of either, and there probably never will be. Nonetheless, many people agree that it is accurate to describe Australian society as 'multicultural' – although others prefer to describe us as 'multi-ethnic' or 'multi-racial'.

Regardless of which description is used, the fact remains that it is the core values and principles of our democratic society that define the characteristic Australian identity of our society.

broad definitions of cultural maintenance that are not restricted to the continuance of traditions, but include the development of new and evolving cultural practices’.

The Australia Council believes that culture is not static, but rather it is a continuum. Therefore to think that ‘maintaining’ culture simply means that it stays static and inevitably leads to ghettoism is too simplistic an assessment of the reality in Australian communities.

On this understanding, Australian culture, while continually growing by interactions of people through artistic and cultural

activities, retains its link with Australia’s cultural heritage.

The Council therefore considers that Australian multiculturalism, far from denying Australian culture, is in fact one of its major achievements. In turn, multiculturalism is an integral dimension of Australian culture and is helping to shape that culture.

With the above in mind, the Council **recommends** that any communication strategy highlights the positive and mutually supportive relationship between Australian culture and Australian multiculturalism.

2.6 MULTICULTURALISM FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

Inclusiveness

The Council believes that, for the coming decade, which will see the start of our second century as a nation, Australian multiculturalism should have ‘inclusiveness’ as a major focus. Multiculturalism in its inclusive sense is crucial to our developing nationhood and Australian identity. It should emphasise the things that unite us as a people – our common membership of the Australian community; our shared desire for social harmony; the benefits of our diversity; our evolving national character and identity.

By emphasising the inclusive nature of the concept and practice of Australian multiculturalism, the Council is seeking to correct the misconception that it is concerned mainly with immigration and minority ethnic communities. The Council strongly endorses the view that multiculturalism is about and for all Australians and that it is crucially concerned

While Australian multiculturalism acknowledges that diversity is a fact of life, and supports policies allowing people the freedom to maintain ethnic identities, values and lifestyles, it insists that this must be done within an overarching framework of common laws and shared values and institutions. English is our national language, and our legal and Parliamentary systems are largely British in origin. Multiculturalism does not diminish, but arises out of, this inheritance. In addition, Australian identity includes the influence and heritage of our indigenous people, as well as of migrants from all over the world.

with our present and evolving 'citizenship', national character and identity.

The Council views multiculturalism as relevant to all Australians, both as a description of the kind of culturally diverse society we seek and as a public policy. It is an important objective, therefore, that multiculturalism seeks to embrace and be embraced by all Australians. It must be seen as relevant to the interests of all sectors of the Australian community: our original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as all other Australians, whether born here or overseas and whether of English- or non-English-speaking origin.

Australian society contains many cultures, traditions and histories. Australian society is, as a descriptive reality, multicultural. Multiculturalism – the strategies that address cultural diversity in our community – is relevant to the *whole* community because *all* Australians are part of this diverse society. We all share Australian democracy and therefore share an interest in its proper, efficient functioning. We all have a cultural identity and belong to a society that guarantees our freedom to live by our cultural preferences, subject to the laws and structures of our democracy. Further, each of us has a legitimate expectation of being treated fairly, and this implies a reciprocal obligation to treat others fairly.

The Council believes it is very important and appropriate to specifically acknowledge the role the receiving community, comprising both Australian and overseas born, has played, particularly over the last 50 years, in welcoming migrants from all over the world, thus helping to build modern multicultural

Australia. The Australian people have continued to receive migrants with warmth, friendship and generosity, and with a level of good humour and tolerance that would not be surpassed by any community in the world. It also acknowledges that had it not been for the democratic, egalitarian traditions of the Australian people, the successful introduction of so many different traditions and customs into Australian society could not have been achieved. While the receiving community has itself become progressively more multicultural, Australians whose origin is wholly or partly from Great Britain and Ireland can take special pride in their heritage for its substantive contribution to the development and success of Australian society. This is exemplified in the underlying philosophy and principles and the essential components of Australia's democratic system, which is the foundation on which our society has been built, and in our special social values of mateship and a *fair go*, which contribute so much to community harmony.

The Council **recommends** that future multicultural policies and strategies give high priority to the notion and promotion of inclusiveness.

Centenary of Federation

The Council's terms of reference recognise the special significance of Australia's Centenary of Federation, which will be celebrated in the year 2001. The Council has been asked to 'consider and provide advice to the Minister on the policy implications of Australia's linguistic and cultural diversity in significant forthcoming events', including the Centenary of Federation.

The Council considers the goodwill and generosity with which migrants from all over the world have been made welcome by the receiving community, the great contribution of Australia's culturally diverse population and the success of Australian multiculturalism, all deserve special recognition and celebration as major achievements of our first century as a nation. These achievements have also placed us in a very strong position to meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities of the next. In less than a hundred years Australia has been transformed from a somewhat insular and largely Anglo-Celtic white society to one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world.

The Council **recommends** that the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, with which it has initiated discussions, as well as all government and other bodies in the public, private and community sectors involved in preparations for the Centenary, ensure that this transformation is given the prominence it deserves. The experience and contribution of Australians from all over the world in the course of this transformation should be appropriately celebrated and commemorated in the events and lasting memorials that mark the Centenary. Full advantage should be taken of the outstanding opportunity that the Centenary celebrations provide to highlight the transition of Australian multiculturalism towards the greater inclusiveness recommended by the Council. Additionally, the interest generated by the Centenary should be used to promote educational programs to make all Australians more aware of our cultural

heritage starting with indigenous people to European settlement to modern multicultural Australia as well as our political history including the development of our democratic system, the creation of the Australian nation in 1901 and the progress leading to the Centenary.

Reconciliation and multiculturalism

No picture of Australia's cultural diversity can be complete without our indigenous cultures. Encouragingly, the cultures of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have now become one of the key distinguishing features of Australian culture and this is increasingly evident in the cultural portrayal of Australia both here and abroad.

However, in recommending that we move towards a more inclusive phase of Australian multiculturalism, the Council believes it needs to stress its deep concern about the state of relations between indigenous people and the wider community. Indigenous people have suffered much injustice and oppression and as a group continue to suffer significant disadvantage relative to the rest of the Australian community. In the Council's view, it should be a matter of the highest priority, for both moral and practical reasons, that *all* Australians now address these fundamental issues which must be resolved fairly and honourably if we are to achieve true reconciliation.

The Council stresses that Australia's multiculturalism will remain fundamentally flawed until we have effected meaningful reconciliation between indigenous and all other Australians based on mutual respect.

From the beginning of British colonisation, the rights of Australia's indigenous people were denied on the basis that the colony was *terra nullius* – a land belonging to no-one. Not until the High Court's *Mabo* decision of 1992 was this doctrine overturned. In the wake of *Mabo*, the 1993 *Native Title Act* formally recognised that Australia had been occupied prior to the arrival of the British. While this recognition has removed one impediment to reconciliation, the complexities of Native Title have raised other issues, the implications of which are still being resolved. It is essential that the challenges that these complex issues raise do not reduce our resolve or the urgency with which we pursue the process of reconciliation.

True reconciliation is critical for this nation if it is to enter the new millennium and the second century of federation as a mature and harmonious society. This is summed up by the vision of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, which this Council wholeheartedly endorses:

a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all.

Australians face a very real challenge to sustain the values of Australian multiculturalism and racial tolerance. During the Sydney 2000 Olympics and Paralympics, Australia will be subject to intense global interest and attention will be given to the progress of relationships between indigenous people and the wider Australian community. Progress towards achievement of true reconciliation will

ensure that Australia's image as a fair, just and non-discriminatory society is enhanced.

In the years since the 1967 Referendum that gave the Commonwealth powers in indigenous issues, there has been considerable progress in addressing the disadvantages suffered by indigenous Australians. It is essential that progress continues to be made in the interests of justice and equality for all Australians.

The Australian Reconciliation Convention in 1997 put reconciliation firmly at the centre of the national political agenda and made it a driving force for community relations and public policy. The Convention and the associated regional and city community meetings established a network for a people's movement for reconciliation, the objective of which is to ensure that reconciliation becomes a practical reality in our society.

The Council strongly supports the 'Call to the Nation' endorsed by the participants of the Convention, which asked all Australians to become personally involved in reconciliation activities in their communities, neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation: A call to the nation

The 'Call to the Nation' contained some very powerful conclusions and challenges, including:

the reconciliation between Australia's indigenous peoples and other Australians is central to the renewal of this nation as a harmonious and just society which lives out its national ethos of a *fair go* for all; and that

until we achieve such reconciliation, this nation will remain diminished.

... reconciliation and the renewal of the nation can be achieved only through a people's movement which obtains the commitment of Australians in all their diversity to make reconciliation a living reality in their communities, workplaces, institutions, organisations and in all expressions of our common 'citizenship'.

... leaders across the social spectrum expressed their own personal apologies and sorrow for the treatment of indigenous peoples; this was itself an historic moment. We call on all parliaments, local governments, organisations and institutions to follow this lead with their own form of apology so that we can move forward together to share responsibility for the future of this nation.

Multiculturalism has hitherto tended to focus on the needs and the contribution of ethnic minorities made up of migrants and their descendants. This is too limited a perspective. We need to acknowledge the unique contributions made by our indigenous people towards Australia's national identity and heritage. And we must accept and affirm the collective responsibility of all Australians to achieve reconciliation between non-indigenous Australians, migrants and Australian-born alike, and our indigenous people and to commit ourselves to the reconciliation process. In the spirit of this principle we will explore with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation how our Council can complement and support their work,

while recognising that responsibility for the reconciliation process is primarily theirs and that reconciliation is of fundamental importance in its own right.

The Council welcomes the appointment of the Hon. Philip Ruddock MP, following the October 1998 Federal election, as both Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Reconciliation. Minister Ruddock's dual responsibilities open opportunities for multicultural initiatives to add value to the reconciliation process.

The Council notes that the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991* ceases to be in force on 1 January 2001. The Council is particularly keen to support the achievements of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation up to and beyond this date. The Council therefore **recommends** that individuals as well as government, private and community organisations commit themselves to carry forward the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation by working to help to improve respect, trust and understanding between indigenous and other Australians. For its part, the Council is committed to supporting ongoing community education activities, speaker exchanges between community organisations, involvement in cultural activities, the development of joint enterprises or partnerships, and reciprocal membership of community organisations.

The Council notes that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has established that 'there is broad community support for a formal reconciliation agreement. A majority of people believes that an agreement would improve relations between

indigenous Australians and the wider community. Strong community support has also been shown for a new Constitutional preamble which would acknowledge the unique status of indigenous people and their original ownership of this land.’ The Council notes that the Government has agreed to hold a referendum on this matter in conjunction with the November 1999 referendum on an Australian Republic. The Council **recommends** that any revision of the preamble of the Australian Constitution incorporates recognition of the diverse backgrounds of the Australian people, including such acknowledgment of the unique status of our indigenous people.

Outreach

To be truly inclusive, it is imperative that multicultural strategies foster constructive relationships between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds in order to build bridges of understanding and mutual interest. The main purpose of such outreach strategies is to reinforce the message that Australians, although very diverse, form a united community.

It is time, therefore, to reassess our willingness to be open to each other. This could be done through, for instance, interaction between the constituent councils of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and other community groups (some of which predated the advent of multiculturalism) such as the Returned and Services League of Australia, the Country Women’s Association of Australia, religious bodies, local government associations, non-government organisations, service, cultural

and sporting clubs, trade unions and professional and business associations.

Further, interaction between disparate groups within a community or business sector – for instance, unions and professional business associations jointly working to improve diversity management – would be directly beneficial to the participants, but would also be indirectly beneficial to the wider community.

Outreach strategies could be promoted by any such organisations through their regular and established activities, through government programs such as *Living in Harmony*, *Discovering Democracy* and the Centenary of Federation celebrations, and through major events such as the Sydney Olympic Games.

The Council **recommends** that future multicultural policies and strategies give high priority to outreach strategies that build bridges of understanding and mutual interest among individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds, including between groups whose members are drawn from specific ethnic and indigenous cultures and more general community bodies.

2.7 A CALL FOR LEADERSHIP

As discussed elsewhere in this report, inclusive multiculturalism is of fundamental importance to our social harmony and a key element in the continual development of our national identity. Inclusive multiculturalism provides the framework necessary to ensure that our cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia. Because of the pervasive influence of multiculturalism on the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of all

Australians, now and in the future, it warrants and demands leadership and positive, proactive support and commitment by political, public service, business and community leaders, educators, the media and individual Australians. Without such leadership, divisive and intolerant views and attitudes can spread to the point where they threaten community harmony, causing significant social and economic stress, and even serious damage. On the other hand, through strong leadership, the benefits of our diversity can be accelerated and maximised, and enjoyed and celebrated by all Australians.

While it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies are in place, in the final analysis it is the people who make them work. The Council therefore **recommends** that future multicultural policies and strategies give high priority to raising awareness of the critical importance of leadership, in all walks of life, for the harmony and wellbeing of a culturally diverse society.

Political leadership

A sound foundation for ongoing political leadership is the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996, with its strong commitment to the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the maintenance of Australia as a culturally diverse, tolerant and open society, as well as its denunciation of racial intolerance in any form.

As in every sphere of human activity, political leadership needs to start at the highest level. We therefore welcome the

strong and clear commitment of the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, to reconciliation and the underlying values of Australian multiculturalism on 3 October 1998, the night of the Government's re-election, when he said:

I want to dedicate my government to the maintenance of traditional Australian values. And they include those great values of mateship and egalitarianism, and that great Australian value of tolerance and of treating people decently and of not discriminating.

We are a nation of many parts and many origins and we should never forget that we should see that as a tremendous asset.

I also want to commit myself, very genuinely, to the cause of true reconciliation with the Aboriginal people of Australia.

The Council believes that the active support of successive governments, irrespective of political persuasion, has been a major factor in the success of multiculturalism in Australia. It is essential that such broad-based political support is maintained because any politicians or parties seeking to form government, or to influence government policy, must ensure that their policies are sensitive to the diverse community they are designed to assist. Failure to do so would be a moral failure, an affront to the strong sense of justice and fair play of the Australian people, and would pose a serious threat to community harmony and the integrity of our democratic system in a

culturally diverse society. This is why the Council urges and **recommends** to all responsible political leaders that they not lend support to or confer any political respectability or credibility on individuals or parties that espouse policies that violate the spirit of the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996. There should be no scope for political expediency to override moral principle.

The Council recognises that adversarial debate is a fundamental component of our Parliamentary system and serves to ensure Government accountability. However, the Council urges all Parliamentary parties throughout Australia, particularly those in Government and Opposition, to seek common ground in relation to multicultural policy and to avoid political point-scoring that would send wrong signals to the community and might damage community harmony.

The Council notes that the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* enjoyed political consensus and strongly **recommends** that all responsible parties, particularly those in Government and Opposition, work together so that the ongoing development of multiculturalism enjoys a similar consensus.

Public service and business leadership

Both public and private sector organisations must similarly provide responsible leadership in promoting the values of anti-racism, tolerance and equity. Given the composition of the society they serve, and the benefits that flow from diversity, these organisations should ensure that their recruitment and

promotion criteria are entirely non-discriminatory. It is widely recognised that diverse work teams are most likely to contain the full range of necessary skills – and the more such diversity is reflected at all levels of the organisation the more effective it is likely to be.

The public sector, at Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local Government levels, has shown commendable leadership by implementing the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*.⁷ The *Charter's* seven principles reflect the recognition that a diverse client-base has diverse needs and that service providers ought to be aware of these needs and sufficiently flexible and responsive to service them. Because the private and community sectors also serve diverse clienteles the *Charter* has direct relevance to them as well. It is important, therefore, that business leaders, not least in the interests of their shareholders, adopt similar principles. Implementation strategies will, of course, vary from company to company, but where they are well executed a beneficial ripple effect will flow to the wider community.

In this era of privatisation and deregulation, many functions have been transferred from the public to the private sector. Among the moral responsibilities transferred to private business with these functions is the imperative of ensuring that the needs that arise from our cultural diversity continue to be properly addressed. Business leaders must see this as their business, along with trade unions and professional business associations.

⁷ The full text of the *Charter* is at Appendix G.

Educator leadership

One of the most important roles of educators is to develop the next generation of ‘citizens’ and leaders. This is, itself, a leadership role. Given that the cultural diversity of Australia’s students mirrors that of the general population, it is incumbent on educators at all levels and in all sectors to help prepare young Australians to live and work harmoniously as productive members of Australia’s diverse community.

Community leadership

Community leaders are also well placed to communicate the message of inclusiveness to community groups. The Council recognises that much good work has been done. It asks organisations such as ethnic associations, religious bodies, local government associations, non-government organisations and service and sporting clubs to continue to encourage participation in Australian society and to stimulate activities encouraging people to build better cross-cultural relations.

Media leadership

Media commentators are opinion makers, not just opinion reporters. As such, they play an important role in influencing perceptions about the way Australians define themselves and their environment. The Council recognises that these commentators carry the sometimes difficult obligation to present a fair and accurate picture of Australian society, including the portrayal of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, while meeting the demands of financial success in a

highly competitive marketplace.

However, because the very fabric of our society can be torn by racial strife, media commentators have a moral responsibility to balance their commercial interests with their community and professional responsibilities when dealing with issues of race, ethnicity and cultural difference. There should be no room for journalistic sensationalism at the expense of an open, accurate presentation of information that assists greater tolerance and understanding and avoids simplistic stereotypes.

Equally, reporting a fair and accurate picture of Australian society necessarily involves highlighting the benefits of cultural diversity. This can be done through an appropriate level of coverage of the numerous success stories of Australian multiculturalism and by emphasising how it can be a positive factor for individuals, organisations and the nation as a whole.

Individual leadership

While it is the Government’s responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies are in place, in the final analysis it is the people who make them work. Individual Australians have a role to play in their neighbourhoods, community groups and workplaces to build on Australia’s successful multicultural model and to avoid a ‘them and us’ perception.

2.8 PRINCIPLES OF AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM

The goals and principles that underpin multicultural policy, as articulated in the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural*

Australia, have continuing relevance and importance. This is confirmed by the Council's consultations. Both the dimensions (rights) and the limits (obligations) of Australian multiculturalism set out in the *National Agenda* have, however, been open to misinterpretation. For instance, some Australians wrongly see multiculturalism as being only about minority ethnic group rights, when in fact it relates to the whole community.

While most Australians are likely to agree with the thrust of the *National Agenda* definitions for both rights and obligations, great care must be taken to avoid any suggestion that they stem exclusively, or even predominantly, from multiculturalism. In fact, they arise from Australian democracy.

The Council **recommends** the adoption of the following statement of the foundations and principles of Australian multiculturalism, which incorporates not only the goals and principles of the 1989 *National Agenda*, but also reflects the revised focus that the Council is proposing:

Australian democracy guarantees us our civic freedoms and our fundamental rights and equality, and it is the institutions of Australian democracy that enable diversity in our society to flourish. Australian society is diverse, encompassing a wealth of cultures, histories and traditions, rural and urban, of indigenous and all other Australians. The proper functioning of our society requires us to manage the consequences of our cultural diversity in the interest of the individual and society as a whole. This will be achieved, and Australian

multiculturalism will be a continuing and fundamental strength of our society, if the Australian people and the institutions of our society base their actions and measure their achievements on the following principles for living with cultural diversity:

- **Civic Duty:** all Australians are obliged to support the basic structures and principles of Australian society – our Constitution, democratic institutions and values – which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish;
- **Cultural Respect:** subject to the law, the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal obligation to accept the right of others to do the same;
- **Social Equity:** all Australians are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity enabling them to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth;
- **Productive Diversity:** the significant cultural, social and economic dividends which arise from the diversity of our population should be maximised for the benefit of all Australians.

The Council **recommends** that these principles be adopted as the basis of an enhanced and refocussed multicultural

policy framework, and emphasises that the initiatives recommended in this report are directed to translating these principles into action.

In particular, the Council **recommends** the enhancement and refocussing of Australian multiculturalism by:

- highlighting that Australian multiculturalism has been built on the evolving values of Australian democracy and ‘citizenship’;
- ensuring that it adequately reflects the balance of rights and obligations expected of all ‘citizens’;
- making it inclusive so that it seeks to embrace and be embraced by all sections of the community by:
 - acknowledging the contribution of all Australians to the success of our multicultural society, and in particular the heritage of Great Britain and Ireland from which our democracy has evolved;
 - stressing the imperative nature and urgency of reconciliation between our indigenous people and all other Australians;
 - promoting acceptance and mutual respect by all Australians of our diverse cultures;
 - drawing a clear conceptual distinction between settlement and multicultural strategies;
- ensuring that we maximise the social, cultural and economic benefits of our diversity and address any of its weaknesses;
- ensuring that the funding of

multicultural programs is based on defined criteria and accountability;

- seeking political leadership and cross-party support for Australian multiculturalism;
- stressing the importance of leadership, in all areas of life, for the harmony and wellbeing of a culturally diverse society.

The Council also calls for leadership and commitment to the objectives of Australian multiculturalism by political, public service, business and community leaders, educators, the media and individual Australians and stresses the importance of cross-party support and consensus on the fundamental principles in which multiculturalism is based.

The proposed changes of emphasis do not imply any lessening of the importance of current strategies, policies and programs designed to address the needs and opportunities that arise from cultural diversity, but they do mark a transition to a more inclusive phase of Australian multiculturalism with the clear recognition that it is founded on the values of Australian democracy and ‘citizenship’.

Further, because Australian multiculturalism will only achieve its full potential if it enjoys greater public understanding and support than at present, it is imperative that a communication strategy also be set in place to explain the policy of Australian multiculturalism and promote its benefits to the wider community. This would be in the long-term interests of the nation, although many positive outcomes can and should be achieved in the short term.

The Council's terms of reference require it to recommend 'a policy and implementation framework for the next decade, that is aimed at ensuring that cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia'.

As set out in chapter 2, the Council considers that it is essential that a proactive policy of multiculturalism continues with the objective of achieving the vision proposed by the Council of 'a united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity'.

The Council also considers that, while the goals and principles that underpin multicultural policy, as articulated in the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, have continuing relevance and importance, now is the time to reaffirm and update them. It has done this by strongly emphasising the democratic foundations of Australian multiculturalism and identifying four principles – civic duty, cultural respect, social equity and productive diversity – that flow from this, and which incorporate the essence of the 1989 *National Agenda* principles.

The Council is proposing that these principles be adopted as the basis of an enhanced and refocused multicultural policy. All programs and strategies that are developed should be validated against one or more of these principles.

Unifying force

While this report recommends a range of ways in which Australian multiculturalism should be enhanced and refocused,

the policy framework that the Council proposes for the next decade is built on the imperatives of making our cultural diversity a unifying force and of maximising the dividends of this diversity. Central to achieving this is the inclusion of all Australians in its purview. Recommendations that are particularly relevant to keeping cultural diversity a unifying force for all Australians include:

- recognising that multiculturalism has been built on the foundations of Australian democracy and that it is our democracy that enables it to flourish;
- stressing the need for Australian multiculturalism to require a balance between the rights and responsibilities of all 'citizens';
- emphasising inclusiveness as a major focus for multicultural policy so that it is seen as being relevant to the interests of all sectors of the Australian community: our original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as all other Australians, whether born here or overseas and whether of English- or non-English-speaking origin;
- recommending the continued usage of the term 'multiculturalism' but emphasising its unique Australian character, that it is the achievement of all Australians and of one combined heritage by using the prefix 'Australian' wherever appropriate;
- defining Australian multiculturalism and recommending that the definition be explained widely to the Australian community through a communication

strategy to ensure there is clarity in the understanding and use of the term;

- emphasising the value of Australian Citizenship and recommending that permanent residents who are eligible to take it up are encouraged to do so;
- linking Australian multiculturalism to our common human condition and membership of the Australian community or 'citizenship';
- arguing that Australian multiculturalism does not deny Australian culture or identity but is derived from them and, in turn, contributes to their ongoing development;
- separating settlement programs from Australian multiculturalism so that the latter is seen as being about and for all Australians, not only migrants from a non-English-speaking background.

3.1 MULTICULTURAL FUNDING: A GOOD INVESTMENT

Funding

One of the criticisms of multiculturalism, which was also present in several submissions to the Council, is that it costs huge sums of public money – some say several billion dollars! Some also complain that such funding is discriminatory because, in their view, it only helps minority ethnic communities.

In the Council's view, funding *per se* is not a central issue, provided justification and accountability standards are met. Emotive arguments about funding can be a distraction from the important questions that such funding aims to address, such as how

our undeniably multicultural society should build community harmony and derive the benefits of its diversity. Multicultural programs are, after all, designed in the national interest, and funds should continue to be available to them as an investment. The dividends are a more fair, stable and harmonious society which is also increasingly able to reap economic rewards from the domestic and international opportunities its diversity offers.

It is true that the cost of general programs can be higher when servicing a culturally diverse clientele than a homogeneous one. There can, in fact, be multicultural aspects to the delivery of almost any government program, although it would be an extremely difficult exercise to attempt to identify and cost them fully. The additional costs can include interpreting and translating costs but they are not always accounted for separately by departments, because they are considered to be a normal part of service delivery which needs to cater to a wide range of diversity and not just cultural diversity. The amount of costing data and analysis required to calculate the additional costs to service a culturally diverse clientele will vary from program to program and whether the effort of making the calculations has practical value, is open to question. In any case, even if such additional costs could be isolated, it would be incorrect to attribute them to multiculturalism as they are incurred for standard service delivery.

It is also difficult to measure exactly funding that can be specifically attributed to multiculturalism because government programs often have several objectives and funding criteria.

Despite these difficulties, the Council felt it was important to achieve a clearer understanding of the funding issue where the costs are clearly attributable to multiculturalism. The Council therefore decided to analyse the budget of the Federal Government Department that has primary responsibility for multiculturalism, namely the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA).

This analysis clearly shows that the allegations of excessive costs incurred by proactive multicultural programs are not factually based and arise out of fundamental misconceptions. The Council believes that it is essential that the most obvious errors be urgently corrected and the real facts disseminated as widely as possible. The Council is confident that a more accurate understanding of the facts will go a long way towards allaying the concerns of the majority of essentially tolerant and fair-minded Australians whose negative perceptions of multiculturalism may have been influenced by their incorrect perception of its costs.

The two major errors, which greatly exaggerate the estimation of such costs, can be corrected very easily. The first arises out of lumping all immigration, settlement and multicultural programs together and attributing the total cost to multiculturalism.

Immigration costs relate to the entry and departure of foreign and Australian nationals and are not the result of multiculturalism. In fact, the bulk of these costs would be incurred even if Australia did not have a permanent migration program because most of the

administrative machinery would still be required for temporary entry and exit. Our strong permanent migration program naturally adds to these costs because of the need to promote Australia to prospective qualified migrants as the best destination compared to other countries, who are also competing to attract them and to give those who do apply efficient and courteous service.

As pointed out earlier in this report, settlement services are also not the outcome of multiculturalism, but rather a natural consequence of our permanent migration program. Even special costs incurred to deliver settlement programs to non-English-speaking background migrants should not be attributed to multiculturalism. Such costs result directly from our non-discriminatory immigration policy which, based on objective selection criteria, seeks to attract migrants who will most benefit Australia, whether they come from an English- or non-English-speaking background.

Australia is, and will always be, a multicultural society, irrespective of our future immigration intake. The Council therefore **recommends** that multiculturalism continues to be developed as an important and distinct priority, in addition to the continuation of settlement programs designed to accommodate the settlement requirements of new migrants.

DIMA's budget can be divided into three broad categories: immigration, settlement and multicultural affairs.

Of the total budget of \$546 million in 1998–99, the largest component,

\$295 million was for immigration, which includes the administration of the permanent migration program (including the refugee and humanitarian aspects of the program) as well as the management of the entry of temporary short and long-stay visitors. The next largest area of expenditure, involving some \$149 million, covers settlement programs. Corporate management overheads account for a further \$92 million which, if allocated on a pro-rata basis, would be largely attributed to the immigration and settlement functions. The remaining amount of \$10 million can be ascribed to multicultural affairs. It amounts to only 1.8% of the DIMA budget (excluding corporate management overheads). Further information is contained in Appendix H.

The second major error that exaggerates the costs of multiculturalism arises from claims by some critics that all government services and payments that go to Australians from a non-English-speaking background should be counted as costs resulting from multiculturalism. Included in such calculations are family allowances, health, education, social security and so on. This allocation of costs is clearly wrong because all such services and payments are directed to the whole community, of whom some – a minority – happen to be from a non-English-speaking background. Access to general programs by ethnic minorities is their right as Australians, not as a separate group.

To argue that all costs incurred in relation to such Australians be attributed to multiculturalism would require that,

conversely, all taxes paid by them should be seen as the direct benefit of multiculturalism. Both propositions are absurd.

It is worth noting, however, that taxes paid by migrants exceed the welfare and benefits paid to them. Further information on government assistance for migrants and refugees is found in 'question and answer' box #5.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that Australian attitudes and policies on the role of government are evolving to place greater emphasis on transparency, efficiency and accountability in government programs, and on the need to achieve practical outcomes. While the Council believes that vigorous promotion of multicultural strategies in all areas of public policy is justified and should continue, it fully accepts that all funding emanating from such strategies should be subject to the same scrutiny as all government programs. It proposes that the main criteria by which the merits of funding for multicultural programs are assessed should be:

- **need** – subject to the eligibility criteria for each program, where an individual or a group has a need arising out of ethnicity or other cultural difference it ought to be met, just as all other special needs are met within our democratic social infrastructure;
- **benefit to Australia** – where it can be demonstrated that addressing a problem or exploiting the advantages of cultural diversity provides an economic, social or cultural benefit

to Australia. This is consistent with government funding of programs in other areas designed to produce beneficial outcomes for Australia;

- **social justice and equity** – all programs should be adjusted to address disadvantage or loss of entitlement arising out of ethnicity or cultural differences, just as other forms of disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups relative to other Australians are addressed.

The Council **recommends** that proposals for new multicultural initiatives, as well as for the renewal of existing ones, are assessed against one or more of the above criteria. This will ensure that all multicultural programs are justified

on objective grounds, effectively answering unfounded criticism and leading to increased public support for Australian multiculturalism.

It should be noted that the Council's analysis and recommendations regarding funding relate to the Federal Government only. State, Territory and Local Government funding is not within the terms of reference of the Council, although the proposed assessment criteria would probably be appropriate at all levels of government.

3.2 DIVERSITY DIVIDENDS

While it is appropriate to ensure that the funding of multicultural programs is fully justified and subject to the highest

QUESTION AND ANSWER: #5

How much government assistance do migrants and refugees receive?

Some people express the view that migrants receive a greater share of government assistance than other Australians, and that, therefore, the policy of Australian multiculturalism unfairly favours them as a 'special interest group'. This is quite incorrect. We must recognise, however, that recently arrived migrants in the community, and particularly those whose first language is other than English, may experience difficulties in adjusting to life in Australia and in gaining access to government services and programs. We must also recognise that it is in the economic interest of Australia to have all migrants working to their full potential

as quickly as possible. The Government therefore provides a range of specialist services and programs to assist migrants in settling into Australia.

This does not, however, any longer extend to welfare benefits. Parliament has passed legislation requiring migrants, except refugees and humanitarian entrants, to wait two years before they are eligible to receive some payments, including unemployment payments. The waiting period is intended to encourage migrants to be more self-sufficient and to require sponsors to provide more assistance during the first two years. Prospective migrants entering Australia are now informed throughout the migration process that they are required to

standards of accountability, it is important to recognise that most of these costs are investments that enable Australia to maximise the benefits from its cultural diversity. These investments, many of which are frequently grouped together under the banner of productive diversity, serve our strategic national interests and produce substantial dividends that accrue to the entire Australian community.

Diversity and Australia's strategic international interests

The globalisation of markets and the massive growth in the use of technology have made the old notion of a homogeneous nation-state obsolete. To remain relevant and competitive in

the new world order, innovative thinking is required. We are part of the global community and, like all countries that take their international relations seriously, Australia exercises its sovereignty with these realities in mind.

Many countries consider Australia to be a model for the management of cultural diversity. We witnessed this at the Global Cultural Diversity Conference held in Sydney in April 1995 where Australia's multicultural policies were internationally recognised.

The Australian model contains opportunities for the advancement of Australia's strategic international interests. For instance, because there is practically no language on earth that is not spoken in Australia and no economy in which

have access to sufficient funds to support themselves or be able to rely on their sponsors for support for their first two years of residence in Australia.

Families with children are, however, immediately eligible for family allowance and maternity allowance. Special benefit may be available in the first two years to migrants whose circumstances change after arrival for reasons beyond their control, resulting in severe hardship. Refugee and humanitarian visa-holders and their immediate family members (partner and dependent children) are exempt from any waiting period.

Like all other Australians, migrants receive government assistance strictly in accordance with the eligibility criteria of government

programs. Assistance varies depending on the program. For example, migrants generally have immediate access to Medicare services. Access to the full range of labour market services is linked to eligibility for social security payments. As many newly arrived migrants are not immediately eligible for social security, they do not have access to the full range of Government employment services. However, migrants who are permanent residents and meet other eligibility criteria are able to access Job-Matching services.

Additionally, while some Australian Citizens who reside overseas receive Australian pensions, a much larger amount is paid to migrants residing permanently in Australia from overseas social security systems.

an Australian has not worked, we are uniquely placed to take advantage of the globalisation of world markets. Further, when we engage any nation socially, politically or economically, we can draw on the knowledge and expertise of Australians from the same background to help make the engagement more beneficial to our national interest.

The Government's Foreign Affairs and Trade policy statement *In the National Interest*, issued in August 1997, argues a case for the integration of a range of domestic and international strategies. It says 'One important area where government, business and the community can work closer together is in the so-called 'public diplomacy': a diplomacy which operates in that area of intersection between the soft realm of image and the hard edge of a country's economic and political interests'.

Until the 1970s Australia's image, particularly among our nearest neighbours, suffered because of our restrictive immigration policy and its related assimilationist objectives. Since then we have become one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world, thanks to our non-discriminatory immigration policy and our proactive approach to multiculturalism. This has significantly improved our image, although some of the events of the past few years have raised some doubts both here and overseas regarding the sincerity and completeness of our policy and attitudinal change. The Council considers that every effort must be made to portray the reality and significance of Australia as a culturally sensitive multicultural society.

With this objective in mind it is important to ensure that opportunities to project a positive image of Australia internationally are not missed – both directly in the international sphere and through the international portrayal of domestic matters. The Council therefore welcomes the *Richness in Diversity* travelling exhibition developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to showcase Australia's cultural diversity in the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand, China, Malaysia and Singapore. The exhibition is a fine example of how Australia can use its cultural diversity in the national interest, internationally.

The Council also notes that the United Kingdom has agreed to hold a Global Cultural Diversity Congress from 19 to 22 March 2000. This date links into the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2000 and other significant forums (such as the United Nations World Conference on Racism). The Congress could provide Australia with another significant public diplomacy opportunity.

International sporting, cultural, diplomatic and political events present further opportunities to showcase Australia to the world, and it is essential that we use our cultural diversity strategically on such occasions. Particular attention needs to be paid to the Sydney 2000 and Paralympic Games. Australia's selection to host these most prestigious of all events was significantly influenced by the strong promotion of our cultural diversity, with special emphasis on our indigenous communities and the contribution of

migrants from all over the world. Australians of diverse cultures played an important role by using their networks in their countries of origin to help secure the Games and to attract numerous other events and programs that will also take place here as a result. The Council acknowledges that the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) has established an Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) and a Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC). The Council's Chairman is an ex-officio member of the MAC and is seeking opportunities for the Council, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and his Department to assist in areas of special responsibility, expertise and influence.

The Council is also urging SOCOG, to ensure involvement and representation of Australia's indigenous and multicultural population at all appropriate levels of influence within the SOCOG organisation. This will encourage our culturally diverse communities who helped to win the Games to continue their contribution in the lead up to the running of the Games and related activities. It will also ensure that the special language, religious, food and other social and cultural requirements of Australians and overseas visitors are well provided for, enabling people of all origins and cultures to share in the enjoyment of the Games.

The Council strongly **recommends** that all bodies responsible for planning and running the Games ensure that Australia fully lives up to the culturally diverse image we previously highlighted. Australia's indigenous and ethnic communities need

to be appropriately represented in all planning and management processes, to encourage their continued contribution and give them a genuine opportunity to share in the enjoyment of the Games and related activities.

The value of the cultural strengths and relationships of Australia's multicultural population has even greater significance when one considers the substantial changes in our international trade, particularly exports, between the 1950s when English-speaking countries dominated and the 1990s – when Asian countries became much more prominent.

These facts point to a continuing and important agenda for the future, aimed at maximising the economic dividend from Australia's diversity.

The strengths of diversity

Cultural diversity enables nations and organisations to meet the challenges and reap the benefits of global markets, global competition and continuous rapid change in a number of ways including:

- familiarity with diverse customs, languages and cultures of global and domestic suppliers, partners and customers;
- expertise, sensitivity, comfort and the ability to build trust in inter-cultural communications;
- access to influential networks in many countries through personal contacts and relationships;
- the potential for introducing new products and services into domestic markets, based on proven successes in overseas economies;

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- ability to test products and services for global markets locally by using people who have first-hand appreciation of both domestic and international preferences and expectations;
 - significant competitive advantage in the provision of services that need language and other inter-personal cultural skills, for example, hospitality, tourism, call-centres, consultancy, health and education services;
 - staying in touch with trends and new developments around the world;
 - the ability to attract skilled people from anywhere in the world as migrants or employees, particularly when the domestic market is unable to meet local demand in the time required.

Australia, as one of the most multicultural nations in the world, is particularly well placed to obtain all of the above benefits. Australian organisations, whether in the public or private sector, are able to use our multicultural strengths to improve the quality and competitiveness of their products and services and to develop a skilled workforce to the level of world best practice. And the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the Australian community has been enriched through the explosion, particularly in the past fifty years, in the diversity of arts, entertainment, music, dance, sport and other leisure pursuits, education, skills, and business and employment opportunities available in Australia.

Apart from the benefits flowing from the cultural background and skills of

numerous countries that are now well represented in Australian society, diversity brings a dividend in its own right through its ability to challenge conventional wisdom and to stimulate creativity and innovation. Countries and organisations that are substantially monocultural, while very successful in the short term due to teamwork and discipline, eventually get into difficulty through stagnation and unwillingness to change. They suffer from 'group think' which discourages questioning of entrenched thinking and practices. Diversity, whatever its source, introduces new perspectives which challenge conventional wisdom and highlight strengths and weaknesses that might have been invisible from the single previous monocultural perspective. Most important of all, diversity stimulates creativity which is often the unexpected result of people daring to be different. Such creativity and the innovation it produces are becoming essential to the survival of countries and organisations in the Information Age with the breathtaking pace of change and with wealth being created by new ideas and intellectual capital. The dominance of the United States of America, a nation with massive and increasing cultural diversity, in the new information industries is no coincidence. While Australia, because of its size, cannot achieve similar dominance across the board, our cultural diversity can make us very successful, particularly in niche market segments.

When one considers the benefits of diversity and its abundant availability in Australia, its limited usage highlights that it is still a highly under-utilised asset.

One would have expected now that our diversity would see significant representation at all levels in all sectors, yet this is not so, particularly at senior levels of business and government. Advisory bodies, boards, executive management teams and ministries, whether in the private, public or community sector, are generally not sufficiently representative of the cultural diversity of the communities they are meant to lead, to manage, to serve, to sell to, to buy from and to work with.

While it is true that some of these changes take time and some of Australia's current diversity is less than two generations old, the Council is strongly of the view that we need to take more care of what is a very precious asset. We also need to do so with some urgency, otherwise we are denying ourselves the immediate benefits of our diversity and, with the rest of the world not standing idly by, many opportunities, if not grasped immediately, may be lost for ever. Acceleration of the use of our culturally diverse people will not occur if it is left entirely to market forces. A more proactive approach is necessary. This should be considered not only for equity reasons, but because it makes good business sense. It should not mean the denial of merit but rather the expansion of merit criteria to include the value of diversity. This is based on the principle that diverse boards, advisory bodies, workforces, public and private sector management teams, law enforcement agencies, Parliaments and governments are all likely to be more successful than ones where all members look and think the same. The Council urges all organisations

to seek diversity at all levels to better represent the community or clientele they serve. It is also important that arts activities, advertising and other marketing promotions, and the media generally, similarly reflect Australia's diversity. The Council **recommends** that the Australian Government in particular, but other levels of government as well, provide leadership by example in this important area by increasing diversity, particularly on advisory bodies and boards, management and workforces involved in the delivery of services and community contact.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs maintains a database, called *Select*,⁸ of highly qualified Australians from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including indigenous people, whose expertise makes them suitable for possible appointment to boards, councils, committees and other advisory bodies. *Select* was developed primarily for Commonwealth Government departments and agencies, but has the potential to be used more widely.

The management of cultural diversity

The benefits of cultural diversity will not be fully realised without effective proactive management. This needs to address two dimensions of productive diversity, one that maximises its potential benefits and another that minimises its potential disadvantages.

8 Further information about accessing *Select*, or nominating for inclusion on the register, can be obtained from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, or through its web site: <http://www.immi.gov.au>

Maximising the benefits

That Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity can provide a competitive advantage for Australian businesses was recognised in the report *Enterprising Nation: Renewing Australia's Managers to Meet the Challenges of the Asia-Pacific Century* (AGPS, 1995) by the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills, chaired by Mr David Karpin. It endorsed the need to focus the training of Australian managers and on harnessing and capitalising on the talents of diversity. It pointed out that by exploiting the existing and potential networks of Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds, Australian businesses will provide access to new markets and ideas for the development of internationally successful products.

This has also been recognised for some time under the Commonwealth's Productive Diversity agenda which has been used to promote the economic benefits that can be obtained by the effective utilisation and management of culturally diverse workforces and the skilful targeting of culturally diverse marketplaces.

Including people of all backgrounds in the advisory and decision-making processes which shape services makes good business sense because it helps service deliverers to develop a better appreciation of their customers' needs and the way to continuously improve their products and services. This gives them a legitimate expectation of deriving a social and an economic dividend.

The Council notes that research undertaken in 1998 by the Committee for the

Economic Development of Australia and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs indicated that while there has been considerable progress in the development and promotion of productive diversity, significant opportunities remain.

For instance, the 1998 research indicates that there are over sixty tertiary courses or modules devoted to cultural diversity education. A 1994 survey found no such courses in existence. On the other hand, the findings suggest that there are still some gaps in the present courses and there are significant opportunities for the business education sector to work cooperatively to advance cultural diversity education, including through partnerships with the business community.

Further, the research indicates that although the business community generally agrees that Australia benefits from its multicultural workforce, less than half of individual companies surveyed have a policy on managing diversity. This deficiency needs to be addressed among small and medium enterprises as well as in the big business sector.

The Council **recommends** that future multicultural policy give high priority to initiatives in education and training that promote productive diversity principles and develop the skills needed to maximise the diversity dividend. This could be done in the first instance in business education and training in both the university and TAFE sectors and, where applicable, through partnerships between business educators and the business community. These principles and skills could also be given priority

through the activities of relevant Commonwealth funding agencies and through direct advocacy with business.

Enhancing diversity planning

The other dimension of productive diversity is in the removal of disadvantage in order to enable Australia's diverse citizens, particularly those whose first language is not English or who obtained their skills and qualifications overseas, to participate in Australian society and the economy at the level of their potential. Action by Government, industry, professional associations and unions to invest in programs to meet the challenges of diversity in the workforce and the economy makes good business sense. Productivity, worker creativity, work safety and efficiency all stand to benefit from initiatives such as English language training, overseas skills recognition and interpreter and translation services.

While significant progress has been made through these initiatives, there is scope for considerably more. The Council sees great merit in enhancing diversity planning in all sectors of the community and welcomes recent initiatives by the Commonwealth to do so. This includes the 1996 decision requiring Commonwealth departments and agencies to develop service charters and the 1998 decision requiring them to develop workplace diversity programs. These initiatives, both of which have direct links with the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, help to ensure that cultural diversity issues are linked with other human diversity issues and managed as core, rather

Recognition of overseas skills and qualifications

Skills and qualifications assessment in Australia is a complex matter with no one body being responsible for the assessment of all levels of skills in all occupations. The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR), which was established in 1989 as part of the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, is the Commonwealth's authority for assessing educational, professional and technical qualifications and skills gained overseas. NOOSR is part of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Trades Recognition Australia, within the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, is responsible for the assessment of trade and related qualifications and skills.

Recognition of overseas skills and qualifications is a vital part of the settlement process and, for the individual, the ultimate proof that their overseas skills and qualifications have been recognised is when they gain employment in a job for which they were originally trained overseas. The fact that many migrants are not working in such jobs is a hidden economic cost for Australia and the Council would support any initiative to assist with utilising these skills more fully.

than peripheral aspects of departmental planning and processes.

The *Charter*, which was developed cooperatively by the Commonwealth, States and Territories, insists that everyone is entitled to expect equality of treatment and opportunity to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia unimpeded by barriers of race, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth. The *Charter* has direct relevance to the private sector as well.

The Australian Public Service (APS) has a very diverse workforce and the Council is pleased to note that this is recognised in the *Public Service Bill 1997* at Section 10, which defines the values which provide the philosophical underpinnings for the Bill. The Council commends the Government for promulgating these APS values in the new Public Service Regulations in early 1998. The Council notes, however, that these values acknowledge that APS employees have diverse backgrounds, but do not specifically acknowledge that the Commonwealth Government's clients also have diverse backgrounds.

The Council considers that adding such an acknowledgment to the APS values would make the Australian Public Service an exemplar of best practice in managing human diversity (not just cultural diversity) in both its workforce and clients. It would also provide an ideal legislative basis for the Client Service Charters that all departments are required to have. The Council therefore **recommends** that the APS values be modified to acknowledge that the Commonwealth Government's clients have diverse backgrounds which

need to be addressed in the development and delivery of services to them.

The Council further **recommends** that private and community sector organisations consider how the APS values and the principles of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* might be relevant to their diversity management and planning processes, and develop similar charters appropriate to their specific environment and the needs of their constituents, customers and employees.

Language

English – the national language

English is Australia's national language. Because it is a significant unifying influence and the ability to speak English is fundamental to full participation in Australian society, there would appear to be virtually no disagreement in the community about the importance of English language skills. There is a widespread view in the community that migrants should be able to speak English, and most migrants whose first language is not English wish to develop functional English language skills – for employment-related purposes and for day-to-day living.

The importance of English language proficiency has recently increased significantly because English has become the defacto standard for business and Internet communications throughout the world.

As part of a range of settlement services for newly-arrived migrants

and humanitarian entrants, the Australian Government provides basic English language tuition for adult migrants. The tuition is administered by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs through the Adult Migrant English Program. In 1997–98, 36,941 adult migrants were assisted through the program at a cost of \$115.6m. While this is essentially a settlement matter, and therefore an immigration-related program, it reflects the criteria proposed for multicultural programs both because it meets the special needs of non-English-speaking ‘citizens’ and, by enabling them to participate more fully, is of benefit to Australia. The higher the level and the more widespread the English language proficiency of the Australian community becomes, the greater the contribution of

all Australians to our economic, social and cultural wellbeing will be. This will help accelerate and maximise the dividends we derive from our diversity.

Accordingly, the Council fully supports, and strongly **recommends** the continuation of the high priority that has been given for many years to English language tuition for adult migrants.

Languages other than English

In a multicultural society such as ours, proficiency in a language other than English is more than desirable; it can be a business or social imperative. If we are to engage the global marketplace and derive maximum benefit from it, Australia must maintain expertise in languages other than English, particularly the major languages of our region and the world.

Key Commonwealth LOTE programs

National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS)

The NALSAS Strategy is a collaborative initiative of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. It assists schools to enhance and expand the provision of Asian language and Asian studies for school students. It is targeted at four languages – Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian, Japanese and Korean – chosen on the basis of their importance to Australia economically and for wider regional interests.

Community languages

The Community Languages Element supports the maintenance of relevant languages and cultures among students of non-English-speaking background, and the learning of languages other than English by all students. It also promotes the understanding of the different cultures within Australian society by all students.

Priority languages

The Priority Languages Element promotes the growth, and excellence in the learning of Aboriginal languages, Arabic, French, German, Modern Greek, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Thai and Vietnamese.

We have a natural advantage at present because many Australians are proficient in one of these languages, it being their first language. This is a precious resource that must be utilised, built on, and passed on to new generations. It is therefore very important that teaching languages other than English continues to be a priority and that the value of a multilingual community be better appreciated.

There are over 40 languages other than English taught in Australian schools. The Commonwealth supports all school-level learning, not only programs relating to languages, by way of funding grants which represent about 12% of total spending on government schools and about 38% of the total support for non-government schools.

The Commonwealth's specific priorities for funding languages other than English, include the NALSAS Strategy and two language elements – Community Languages and Priority Languages.

The Council fully endorses all these language programs, and **recommends** their continuation.

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Central coordinating agency

A primary role for government is to provide political and moral leadership to ensure that there is widespread community acceptance and support for a proactive approach to multicultural policy. All government policies and programs, not just those that have a specific multicultural objective, must take into account the diversity that permeates our society.

The Council has stressed that the future success of Australian multiculturalism requires leadership and commitment by political, public service, business and community leaders, educators, the media and individual Australians. To achieve community-wide leadership the Council has recommended that future multicultural strategies and policies give high priority to raising awareness of the critical importance of leadership in all walks of life for the harmony and wellbeing of our culturally diverse society.

At a political level the Council has called for broad-based support of Australian multiculturalism. In particular, the Council has urged that the ongoing development of multiculturalism enjoys the consensus that was achieved in relation to the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* and for all responsible political bodies to refuse to lend support to or confer any political respectability or credibility on individuals or parties that espouse policies that violate the spirit of the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996.

In the Council's view, the best way for the Australian Government to demonstrate both leadership and commitment, and to ensure that multicultural principles are applied consistently and effectively across all departments, is through the establishment of an independent central agency responsible for the oversight of the Government's multicultural program.

The proposed agency would have primary responsibility for implementing the policy framework recommended by this report.

This includes supporting the multicultural programs of other Commonwealth departments and agencies, coordinating the Commonwealth's role in relation to State, Territory and Local Governments, the private sector and the wider community, monitoring and reporting on progress and updating the recommendations periodically.

It would have as a central task the promotion of a strong, unified and harmonious society whose people have a thorough understanding of the diverse cultures within it – the combined contributions of the indigenous people and those who came here later from all over the world, and their descendants. Such an agency would promote tolerance and understanding among all sections of the Australian community, in particular, addressing the question of what it means to be a good 'citizen' in our culturally diverse society.

To promote its objectives the agency would be responsible for commissioning and conducting policy-relevant research and studies, promotional and educational activities, and the furnishing of reports to the Government.

The Council does not wish to be too prescriptive with regard to the precise form and location of the proposed agency. What is important is that the agency has the credibility and general acceptance that it needs to be effective. For this it is essential that it is clear to opinion leaders and opinion makers, its clients and partners, and the Australian community that the agency enjoys the support of the Prime Minister.

As a general rule the most direct way to highlight Prime Ministerial authority and

support of any agency is for it to reside within the Prime Minister's portfolio. This would also align the Commonwealth with the practice in the States and Territories where Premiers and Chief Ministers have assumed responsibility for multicultural issues.

However, the Council is flexible on this issue and recognises that the allocation of ministerial responsibilities is clearly the prerogative of the Prime Minister of the day who has to balance numerous competing priorities. In the event that the agency is not located in the Prime Minister's portfolio, special efforts will need to be made by the Prime Minister to provide the leadership and commitment that multiculturalism, because of its sensitivity and importance to all Australians, requires, particularly if it is to achieve a greater sense of inclusiveness. Also, in these circumstances, the Council would strongly recommend that responsibility for the agency be given to a Cabinet Minister so that multiculturalism receives due visibility and consideration in all Cabinet deliberations.

The Council also does not wish to be overly prescriptive in relation to the precise form of the proposed agency. Several models could be considered, including a Commission, an Office or a Council. Whatever its specific form, it needs to be able to perform its duties independently and its responsibilities should include the provision of advice and advocacy to the Government, the implementation of approved programs, and a leadership and promotional role.

To promote its objectives the agency would be responsible for commissioning and conducting policy-relevant research and studies, promotional and educational activities, and the furnishing of reports to the Government.

The Council **recommends** the formation of a central coordinating agency, responsible to the Prime Minister or a Cabinet Minister, to help formulate and implement the Australian Government's multicultural policies and to coordinate them with the initiatives of other levels of government and the wider community.

Program coordination

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have enacted a number of policies and programs that promote or complement Australian multiculturalism. These include:

- *Discovering Democracy*, developed within the Education, Training and Youth Affairs portfolio, which supports civics and 'citizenship' education in schools and other education sectors;
- the *Richness in Diversity* travelling exhibition developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to showcase Australia's cultural diversity in the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand, China, Malaysia and Singapore;
- the initiatives being planned to mark the Centenary of Federation;
- the *Living in Harmony* program, which includes measures to assist government, corporate and community organisations to counter racism and promote unity and harmony;

- the *Australia be Proud* initiative which provides factual information about immigration and related issues and has appointed prominent Australians as *Ambassadors for Truth*;
- the various State and Territory multicultural programs and initiatives including grants, festivals and productive diversity initiatives.

The Council considers it essential that, where appropriate, linkages are developed and maintained between these initiatives. The main purpose of such policy and program coordination is that government initiatives are likely to be most effective if they work in concert with each other and reinforce their common messages to the people they are designed to influence. The Council **recommends** that the proposed agency be given responsibility to promote cooperation between Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies in relation to multiculturalism. It must also have clear and strong administrative linkages to other relevant bodies such as the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the Australian Citizenship Council and other agencies concerned with different aspects of human diversity.

Communication strategy

While opinion polls and submissions to the Council consistently confirm that the majority of Australians support Australian multiculturalism, community harmony will be enhanced if the concerns of critics are treated seriously and responded to constructively even though they represent a minority.

The Council believes that much of the concern that some Australians have regarding multiculturalism stems from a lack of information or misunderstanding about it. This is evident from the submissions the Council received, as well as from various forums in which Council members have been involved. Therefore, there is a pressing need to bring more clarity to multicultural policy, and to communicate a clear message to the wider community, including government and non-government agencies.

The Council believes that it is particularly important to communicate this message because of the inclusive approach to multicultural policy being recommended by this report. We are all Australians and, while racially, culturally and socially diverse, we have fundamental equalities and similarities as individual people. In the Council's view, appealing to this common ground will facilitate wider understanding and support of the multicultural policy framework it has recommended.

The Council **recommends** that the central coordinating agency described above take responsibility for developing and implementing the communication strategy both immediately and on an ongoing basis. In doing so, the agency should build on current Commonwealth programs such as the *Living in Harmony* initiative; the 50th Anniversary of Australian Citizenship; the Adult Migrant English Program 50th anniversary; and the *Discovering Democracy* civics education program. The agency should also cooperate in initiatives by the States and Territories and non-government organisations such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia.

In deciding what messages need to be promoted to the community, the agency will need to consider the major issues raised in this report, for example, the democratic origins of Australian multiculturalism, its inclusive nature and the importance of maximising the dividends of our cultural diversity. It will need to focus on the facts and figures and address the myths surrounding multiculturalism. The communication strategy will need to build on past initiatives such as the access and equity strategy and Productive Diversity agenda.

In designing its communication strategy, the agency needs to have in mind the different audiences that make up modern Australia including, for example, rural and urban communities, small, medium and large business organisations, various ethnic, religious and racial groups, white-collar and blue-collar workers, people of different age groups, Australian-born and migrants.

The Council considers that the message to the community must be a positive one: cultural diversity – and Australian multiculturalism – brings many benefits to, and is about and for, all Australians; multiculturalism, which seeks to maximise these benefits and to promote community harmony based on inclusiveness, has the strong commitment of all Australian governments and enjoys the support of all responsible political parties, especially those in Government and Opposition throughout Australia; Australian multiculturalism is one of the greatest achievements of Australian democracy and Australian culture.

The agency will also need to decide in what form the messages will be promoted. These could be through brochures, CD-ROM, the Internet, lectures, workshops, mass media and public relations.

Business, academia, community and sporting organisations that have wide community reach could be used to help deliver the strategy's messages. There would also be major benefits in coordinating the communication initiatives of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

The communication strategy should aim to raise awareness about our cultural diversity and to create mutual understanding between different groups in our communities. By promoting the inclusive nature of multiculturalism, different elements of our community, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, will be drawn closer together.

An important element of communication is that to be truly effective it needs to be a two-way process. It is therefore essential that the communication strategy involves an active program of consultation and discussion as well as other means of gaining feedback from the community to ensure that the development of Australian multiculturalism always takes such input into account.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The Council is optimistic about Australia's future as a culturally diverse society and is confident that Australian multiculturalism will continue to be a defining feature of our evolving national identity and contribute substantial benefits to all Australians.

There is every reason to expect that the Australian community will become even more diverse in its racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic mix over the next decade. Distinctions will blur as dominant and minority cultures adapt to coexistence and these interactions and influences on each other give rise to new variations of Australian culture.

Multiculturalism is built on an understanding of the complex processes of acceptance, mutual contribution and sharing that are needed for a culturally diverse society such as ours to function effectively and fairly. Australian multiculturalism has served Australia well and proactive multicultural policies will continue to add value and make cultural diversity a unifying force for all Australians.

Australia is one community, albeit a culturally diverse one, drawn together from all across the world. This is why the Council's report so strongly stresses the overriding importance of the basic principles of Australian democracy on which our multiculturalism is built and recommends a number of refinements that place increased emphasis on leadership and inclusiveness.

Because of its fundamental importance to community harmony in a culturally diverse society, Australian multiculturalism requires commitment at all levels and in all spheres to ensure it enjoys broad-based community support. In particular, the Council urges all responsible political leaders, especially those in Government and Opposition, to make their commitment to Australian multiculturalism clearly understood both here and overseas. This reaffirmation will help lead all

Australians to embrace and value our diversity and reject discrimination and intolerance in any form. It will also enhance Australia's reputation and image as a fundamentally tolerant and fair multicultural society across the world, but most importantly among our neighbours.

Inclusiveness is the key to the principles of Australian multiculturalism recommended by the Council. These principles articulate the essential balance of rights and obligations that are necessary to a just and united society. They have evolved over our history as a nation and have helped Australia to meet the challenges to our social harmony that have occurred from time to time, including in recent experience.

The capacity, good sense, goodwill and determination of the Australian people to constructively address the challenges we face should give us all confidence that we can and will continue to reap the dividends of our cultural diversity and together achieve the vision for Australian multiculturalism recommended by the Council of

a united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM: TOWARDS INCLUSIVENESS

The continuing importance of multiculturalism

1. Australian society has undergone an enormous amount of change in the space of a single generation, and faces more crucial decisions. The Council **recommends** continued government support for Australian multiculturalism as a fundamental requirement and opportunity arising out of the cultural diversity of Australian society, and that this commitment be reflected in all government policies.

The meaning of multiculturalism

2. The Council believes that the term 'multiculturalism' has served the Australian community well and best describes our positive acceptance of the reality and significance of our cultural diversity and the proactive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from it. While the term has drawn criticism from some segments of the community, and this is reflected in some of the submissions the Council has received, it believes there is no alternative noun that would work better. Also, any alternative term would soon attract similar criticism from those critical of the term or policy of multiculturalism. For all these reasons the Council **recommends** the retention of the term 'multiculturalism'.
3. Further, in order to recognise that our implementation of multiculturalism

is unique and reflects Australia's diverse heritage, history, democracy, culture and identity, it **recommends** that the prefix 'Australian' be used whenever appropriate.

4. The Council **recommends** the adoption of the following definition of Australian multiculturalism:

Australian multiculturalism is a term which recognises and celebrates Australia's cultural diversity. It accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures and values of Australian democracy. It also refers to the strategies, policies and programs that are designed to:
 - make our administrative, social and economic infrastructure more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of our culturally diverse population;
 - promote social harmony among the different cultural groups in our society;
 - optimise the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians.
5. The Council **recommends** that the definition of Australian multiculturalism be clearly explained through a communication strategy that is designed to reach as many individuals and groups of the Australian community as possible.

A vision for Australian multiculturalism

6. The Council **recommends** the adoption of the following vision for Australian multiculturalism: 'a united and harmonious Australia, built on the foundations of our democracy, and developing its continually evolving nationhood by recognising, embracing, valuing and investing in its heritage and cultural diversity'.

Multiculturalism and Australian democracy

Australian Citizenship and 'citizenship'

7. The Council believes there is a close and positive relationship between multiculturalism and the legal status of Australian Citizenship as well as the wider concept of 'citizenship' which refers to membership of the Australian community that is enjoyed by Australian Citizens and permanent residents. Australian Citizenship has played an important unifying role in the development of Australia's nationhood and the modern multicultural society which has evolved with it. The Council believes it is highly desirable for Australian permanent residents to acquire Australian Citizenship when they become eligible to do so, and **recommends** the active promotion of the benefits of Australian Citizenship to encourage its take-up. However, it must be recognised that permanent residents, who are not yet eligible for or have not yet chosen to acquire Australian Citizenship, are nonetheless members of the Australian

community and have all the rights and obligations of Australian Citizens except those that arise exclusively from Australian Citizenship.

8. The Council commends the work of the *Discovering Democracy* program developed within the Education, Training and Youth Affairs portfolio, which supports civics and citizenship education in schools and the wider community. The Council **recommends** that the program be used to reach as many Australians as possible. The Council intends providing input into the future development of this program to ensure that the cultural diversity of our society and its benefits, as well as the meaning and value of multiculturalism receive appropriate emphasis.

Multiculturalism and Australian culture

9. A strongly expressed view in some of the public submissions from respondents who claim 'Anglo' or 'old Australia' heritage is that multiculturalism is a negative and divisive feature of Australian society, creating disdain for people of Anglo-Celtic origins and denigrating Australian culture by promoting other cultures as more worthy. The Council respects the people expressing these concerns but believes their views reflect an incorrect perception of multiculturalism, pointing to an important communication strategy priority. Australian culture is dynamic. It starts with and retains its links to our total heritage, but is not a fossilised entity which remains static

from the time a particular group sets foot on Australian soil. Rather, it is a living, changing and interacting set of life patterns. It has been modified and enhanced by the arrival of many migrant groups. It continues to be developed by the evolution of ideas and customs within Australia and by global influences. The Council **recommends** that any communication strategy highlights the positive and mutually supportive relationship between Australian culture and Australian multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism for all Australians

Inclusiveness

10. Multiculturalism in its inclusive sense is crucial to our developing nationhood and Australian identity. The Council **recommends** that future multicultural policies and strategies give high priority to the notion and promotion of inclusiveness. It is important to correct the misconception that multiculturalism is concerned mainly with immigration and minority ethnic communities. Multiculturalism is about and for all Australians, and it is important that it seeks to embrace and be embraced by all Australians. It must be seen as relevant to the interests of all sectors of the Australian community: our original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as all other Australians, whether born here or overseas and whether of English- or non-English-speaking origin.
11. The Council **recommends** that the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, with which it has initiated discussions, as well as all government and other bodies in the public, private and community sectors involved in preparations for the Centenary, ensure that the transformation of Australia from a somewhat insular and largely Anglo-Celtic white society to one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, is given the prominence it deserves. The experience and contribution of Australians from all over the world in the course of this transformation should be appropriately celebrated and commemorated in the events and lasting memorials that mark the Centenary. Full advantage should be taken of the outstanding opportunity that the Centenary celebrations provide to highlight the transition of Australian multiculturalism towards the greater inclusiveness recommended by the Council. Additionally, the interest generated by the Centenary should be used to promote educational programs to make all Australians more aware of our cultural heritage starting with indigenous people to European settlement to modern multicultural Australia, as well as our political history including the development of our democratic system, the creation of the Australian nation in 1901 and the progress leading to the Centenary.
12. The Council notes that the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991* ceases to be in force on 1 January 2001. The Council is particularly keen to support the achievements of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation up to and beyond this date. The Council

therefore **recommends** that individuals as well as government, private and community organisations commit themselves to carry forward the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation by working to help to improve respect, trust and understanding between indigenous and other Australians. For its part, the Council is committed to supporting ongoing community education activities, speaker exchanges between community organisations, involvement in cultural activities, the development of joint enterprises or partnerships, and reciprocal membership of community organisations.

13. The Council notes that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has established that ‘there is broad community support for a formal reconciliation agreement. A majority of people believes that an agreement would improve relations between indigenous Australians and the wider community. Strong community support has also been shown for a new Constitutional preamble which would acknowledge the unique status of indigenous people and their original ownership of this land.’ The Council notes that the Government has agreed to hold a referendum on this matter in conjunction with the November 1999 referendum on an Australian Republic. The Council **recommends** that any revision of the preamble of the Australian Constitution incorporates recognition of the diverse backgrounds of the Australian people, including such acknowledgment of the unique status of our indigenous people.

14. The Council **recommends** that future multicultural policies and strategies give high priority to outreach strategies that build bridges of understanding and mutual interest among individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds, including between groups whose members are drawn from specific ethnic and indigenous cultures and more general community bodies.

A call for leadership

15. Because of the pervasive influence of multiculturalism on the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of all Australians, now and in the future, it warrants and demands leadership and positive, proactive support and commitment by political, public service, business and community leaders, educators, the media and individual Australians. Without such leadership, divisive and intolerant views and attitudes can spread to the point where they threaten community harmony, causing significant social and economic stress, and even serious damage. On the other hand, through strong leadership, the benefits of our diversity can be accelerated and maximised, and enjoyed and celebrated by all Australians. While it is the Government’s responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies are in place, in the final analysis it is the people who make them work. The Council therefore **recommends** that future multicultural strategies and policies give high priority to raising awareness of the critical importance of leadership,

in all walks of life, for the harmony and wellbeing of our culturally diverse society.

16. The Council believes that the active support of successive governments, irrespective of political persuasion, has been a major factor in the success of multiculturalism in Australia.

It is essential that such broad-based political support is maintained because any politicians or parties seeking to form government, or to influence government policy, must ensure that their policies are sensitive to the diverse community they are designed to assist. Failure to do so would be a moral failure, an affront to the strong sense of justice and fair play of the Australian people, and would pose a serious threat to community harmony and the integrity of our democratic system in a culturally diverse society. This is why the Council urges and **recommends** to all responsible political leaders that they not lend support to or confer any political respectability or credibility on individuals or parties that espouse policies that violate the spirit of the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996. There should be no scope for political expediency to override moral principle.

17. The Council recognises that adversarial debate is a fundamental component of our Parliamentary system and serves to ensure government accountability. However, the Council urges all Parliamentary parties throughout Australia, particularly those in

Government and Opposition, to seek common ground in relation to multicultural policy and to avoid political point-scoring that would send wrong signals to the community and might damage community harmony. The Council notes that the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* enjoyed political consensus and strongly **recommends** that all responsible parties, particularly those in Government and Opposition, work together so that the ongoing development of multiculturalism enjoys a similar consensus.

Principles of Australian multiculturalism

18. The Council **recommends** the adoption of the following statement of the foundations and principles of multiculturalism, which incorporates all of the goals and principles of the 1989 *National Agenda*, but which also reflects the focus that the Council is proposing:

Australian democracy guarantees us our civic freedoms and our fundamental rights and equality, and it is the institutions of Australian democracy that enable diversity in our society to flourish. Australian society is diverse, encompassing a wealth of cultures, histories and traditions, rural and urban, of indigenous and all other Australians. The proper functioning of our society requires us to manage the consequences of our cultural diversity in the interest of the individual and society as a

whole. This will be achieved, and Australian multiculturalism will be a continuing and fundamental strength of our society, if the Australian people and the institutions of our society base their actions and measure their achievements on the following principles for living with cultural diversity:

- **Civic Duty:** all Australians are obliged to support the basic structures and principles of Australian society – our Constitution, democratic institutions and values – which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish;
- **Cultural Respect:** subject to the law, the right to express one’s own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal obligation to accept the right of others to do the same;
- **Social Equity:** all Australians are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity enabling them to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth;
- **Productive Diversity:** the significant cultural, social and economic dividends which arise from the diversity of our population should be maximised for the benefit of all Australians.

19. The Council **recommends** that these principles be adopted as the basis of an enhanced and refocussed

multicultural policy framework, and emphasises that the initiatives recommended in this report are directed to translating these principles into action.

20. In particular, the Council **recommends** the enhancement and refocussing of multiculturalism by:

- highlighting that Australian multiculturalism has been built on the evolving values of Australian democracy and ‘citizenship’;
- ensuring that it adequately reflects the balance of rights and obligations expected of all ‘citizens’;
- making it inclusive so that it seeks to embrace and be embraced by all sections of the community by:
 - acknowledging the contribution of all Australians to the success of our multicultural society, and in particular the heritage of Great Britain and Ireland from which our democracy has evolved;
 - stressing the imperative nature and urgency of reconciliation between our indigenous people and all other Australians;
 - promoting acceptance and mutual respect by all Australians of our diverse cultures;
 - drawing a clear conceptual distinction between settlement and multicultural strategies;
- ensuring that we maximise the social, cultural and economic benefits of our diversity and address any of its weaknesses;

- ensuring that the funding of multicultural programs is based on defined criteria and accountability;
- seeking political leadership and cross-party support for Australian multiculturalism;
- stressing the importance of leadership, in all areas of life, for the harmony and wellbeing of a culturally diverse society.

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM: THE NEXT STEPS

Multicultural funding: a good investment

Funding

21. The funding directed to Australian multiculturalism is, while not inconsiderable, very much lower than sometimes perceived. This is clear from the Council's analysis of the budget of the Federal Government Department that has primary responsibility for multiculturalism, namely the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (see Appendix H). In the Council's view, funding *per se* is not a central issue, provided justification and accountability standards are met. Emotive arguments about funding can be a distraction from the important questions that such funding aims to address, such as how our undeniably multicultural society should build community harmony and derive the benefits of its diversity. Multicultural programs are, after all, designed in the national interest, and funds should continue to be available to them as an investment. The dividends are a more fair, stable and harmonious

society which is also increasingly able to reap economic rewards from the domestic and international opportunities its diversity offers. The Council therefore **recommends** that multiculturalism continues to be developed as an important and distinct priority, in addition to the continuation of settlement programs designed to accommodate the settlement requirements of new migrants.

22. While the Council believes that vigorous promotion of multicultural strategies in all areas of public policy is justified and should continue, it fully accepts that all funding emanating from such strategies should be subject to the same scrutiny as all government programs. It proposes that the main criteria by which the merits of funding for multicultural programs are assessed should be:

- **need** – subject to the eligibility criteria for each program, where an individual or a group has a need arising out of ethnicity or other cultural difference it ought to be met, just as all other special needs are met within our democratic social infrastructure;
- **benefit to Australia** – where it can be demonstrated that addressing a problem or exploiting the advantages of cultural diversity provides an economic, social or cultural benefit to Australia. This is consistent with government funding of programs in other areas designed to produce beneficial outcomes for Australia;
- **social justice and equity** – all programs should be adjusted to address disadvantage or loss of

entitlement arising out of ethnicity or cultural differences, just as other forms of disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups relative to other Australians are addressed.

The Council **recommends** that proposals for new multicultural initiatives, as well as for the renewal of existing ones, are assessed against one or more of the above criteria. This will ensure that all multicultural programs are justified on objective grounds, effectively answering unfounded criticism and leading to increased public support for Australian multiculturalism.

Diversity dividends

Funding for multiculturalism should not be seen merely as a cost but as an investment that yields significant benefits to the whole Australian community.

23. The Council notes that the success of Australia's culturally diverse society can contribute significantly to Australia's image in the promotion of our strategic international interests. With this objective in mind we must ensure that opportunities to project a positive image of Australia internationally must not be missed. Particular attention needs to be paid to the Sydney 2000 and Paralympic Games. Australia's selection to host these most prestigious of all events was significantly influenced by the strong promotion of our cultural diversity, with special emphasis on our indigenous communities and the contribution of migrants from all over the world. The Council is also urging the Sydney Organising Committee for

the Olympic Games (SOCOG) to ensure involvement and representation of Australia's indigenous and ethnic population at all appropriate levels of influence within the SOCOG organisation. This will encourage our culturally diverse communities who helped to win the Games to continue their contribution in the lead up to the running of the Games and related activities. It will also ensure that the special language, religious, food and other social and cultural requirements of Australians and overseas visitors are well provided for, enabling people of all origins and cultures to share in the enjoyment of the Games.

The Council strongly **recommends** that all bodies responsible for planning and running the Games ensure that Australia fully lives up to the culturally diverse image we previously highlighted. Australia's indigenous and ethnic communities need to be appropriately represented in all planning and management processes, to encourage their continued contribution and give them a genuine opportunity to share in the enjoyment of the Games and related activities.

24. Advisory bodies, boards, executive management teams and ministries, whether in the private, public or community sector, are generally not sufficiently representative of the cultural diversity of the communities they are meant to lead, to manage, to serve, to sell to, to buy from and to work with. Acceleration of the use of our culturally diverse people will not occur if it is left entirely to market

forces. A more proactive approach is necessary. This should be considered not only for equity reasons, but because it makes good business sense. It should not mean the denial of merit but rather the expansion of merit criteria to include the value of diversity. This is based on the principle that diverse boards, advisory bodies, workforces, public and private sector management teams, law enforcement agencies, Parliaments and governments are all likely to be more successful than ones where all members look and think the same. The Council urges all organisations to seek diversity at all levels to better represent the community or clientele they serve. The Council **recommends** that the Australian Government in particular, but other levels of government as well, provide leadership by example in this important area by increasing diversity, particularly on advisory bodies and boards, management and workforces involved in the delivery of services and community contact.

25. The Council notes that research undertaken in 1998 for the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs indicates that significant opportunities exist for the development and promotion of productive diversity. The Council **recommends** that future multicultural policy give high priority to initiatives in education and training that promote productive diversity principles and develop the skills needed to maximise the diversity

dividend. This could be done in the first instance in business education and training in both the university and TAFE sectors and, where applicable, through partnerships between business educators and the business community. These principles and skills could also be given priority through the activities of relevant Commonwealth funding agencies and through direct advocacy with business.

26. The Australian Public Service (APS) has a very diverse workforce and the Council is pleased to note that this is recognised in the *Public Service Bill 1997* at Section 10, which defines the values which provide the philosophical underpinnings for the Bill. The Council notes, however, that these values acknowledge that APS employees have diverse backgrounds, but do not specifically acknowledge that the Commonwealth Government's clients also have diverse backgrounds. The Council considers that adding such an acknowledgment to the APS values would make the Australian Public Service an exemplar of best practice in managing human diversity (not just cultural diversity) in both its workforce and clients. It would also provide an ideal legislative basis for the Client Service Charters that all departments are required to have. The Council therefore **recommends** that the APS values be modified to acknowledge that the Commonwealth Government's clients have diverse backgrounds which need to be addressed in the development and delivery of services to them.

27. The Council further **recommends** that private and community sector organisations consider how the APS values and the principles of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* might be relevant to their diversity management and planning processes, and develop similar charters appropriate to their specific environment and the needs of their constituents, customers and employees.

Language

28. English is Australia's national language. Because it is a significant unifying influence and the ability to speak English is fundamental to full participation in Australian society, there would appear to be virtually no disagreement in the community about the importance of English language skills. The importance of English language proficiency has recently increased significantly because English has become the defacto standard for business and Internet communications throughout the world. Accordingly, the Council fully supports, and strongly **recommends** the continuation of, the high priority that has been given for many years to English language tuition for adult migrants.

29. In a multicultural society such as ours, proficiency in a language other than English is more than desirable; it can be a business or social imperative. If we are to engage the global marketplace and derive maximum benefit from it, Australia must maintain expertise in languages other than English, particularly the major languages of

our region and the world. It is therefore very important that teaching languages other than English continues to be a priority and that the value of a multilingual community be better appreciated. The Commonwealth's specific priorities for funding languages other than English include the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy and two language elements – Community Languages and Priority Languages. The Council fully endorses all these language programs, and **recommends** their continuation.

Implementation framework

Central coordinating agency

30. A primary role for government is to provide political and moral leadership to ensure that there is widespread community acceptance and support for a proactive approach to multicultural policy. All government policies and programs, not just those that have a specific multicultural objective, must take into account the diversity that permeates our society. In the Council's view, the best vehicle for the Australian Government to demonstrate both leadership and commitment, and to ensure that multicultural principles are applied consistently and effectively across all departments, is through the establishment of an independent central agency responsible for the oversight of the Government's multicultural program. The Council **recommends** the formation of a

central coordinating agency, responsible to the Prime Minister or a Cabinet Minister, to help formulate and implement the Australian Government's multicultural policies and to coordinate them with the initiatives of other levels of government and the wider community.

31. Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have enacted a number of policies and programs that promote or complement multiculturalism. The Council considers it essential that, where appropriate, linkages are developed and maintained between these initiatives. The Council **recommends** that the proposed agency be given responsibility to promote cooperation between Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies in relation to multiculturalism. It must also have clear and strong administrative linkages to other relevant bodies such as the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the Australian Citizenship Council and other agencies concerned with different aspects of human diversity.

Communication strategy

32. The Council considers that community harmony will be enhanced if the concerns of critics of multiculturalism are treated seriously and responded to constructively even though they represent a minority. The Council believes that much of the concern about Australian multiculturalism stems from lack of information or misunderstanding about it. The Council believes that it is particularly important

to communicate what multiculturalism means because of the inclusive approach to multicultural policy being recommended by this report. We are all Australians and, while racially, culturally and socially diverse, we have fundamental equalities and similarities as individual people. The Council **recommends** that the agency described above take responsibility for developing and implementing the communication strategy both immediately and on an ongoing basis. An important element of communication is that to be truly effective it needs to be a two-way process. It is therefore essential that the communication strategy involve an active program of consultation and discussion, as well as other means of gaining feedback from the community to ensure that the development of Australian multiculturalism always takes such input into account.

APPENDIX A

NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council will advise the Minister on policies for further enhancing Australia's unique culturally and linguistically diverse society. The Council will:

1. Develop a report to the Minister which recommends on a policy and implementation framework for the next decade, that is aimed at ensuring that cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia.

The report should:

- articulate the guiding principles and unifying values that underpin the policy;
- identify elements of a policy framework and implementation strategy (including any impediments in the current policy framework and nomenclature) which will contribute to:
 - : broad community support for, and understanding of, these principles and values;
 - : enhancing national unity through acceptance by Australians of both the diversity and the common structures of Australia.

2. Consider and provide advice to the Minister on the policy implications of Australia's linguistic and cultural diversity in significant forthcoming events including the Centenary of Federation and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.
3. Provide advice and report on other specific matters referred to it by the Minister.

In carrying out its work the Council will:

- Take account of the Joint Parliamentary Statement of 30 October 1996 that: 'this House:
 - reaffirms its commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin;
 - reaffirms its commitment to maintaining an immigration policy wholly non-discriminatory on grounds of race, colour, creed or origin;
 - reaffirms its commitment to the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in the context of redressing their profound social and economic disadvantage;
 - reaffirms its commitment to maintain Australia as a culturally diverse, tolerant and open society, united by an overriding commitment to our nation, and its democratic institutions and values;
 - denounces racial intolerance in any form as incompatible with the kind of society we are and want to be.'
- Take account of the context emerging from wider Government directions, priorities and policies, including commitments to:
 - seek a socially cohesive, tolerant and harmonious nation united by common values, goals and aspirations;
 - advance the interests of the wider community, and hence the national

-
- interest, as distinct from the special interests of sectional groups;
 - individual choice and responsibility as integral to public policy-making in Australia;
 - fair, open and competitive markets that support both economic and social needs;
 - work with community groups to develop the great strengths which derive from the diversity of languages and cultures in Australian society, and to reaffirm the strength of the unifying values that Australians share.
- Note that the values/principles underpinning current multicultural policy as articulated in the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* retain their importance.

The Council may wish to consider the application of those values/principles in the context of changing circumstances. It is noted that a great deal has been achieved under policies and programs that have been built on those values/principles. These policies and programs include access and equity, anti-racism education, English language services, settlement services and those relating to the benefits of cultural and linguistic diversity. The challenge is to ensure that policies adapt to meet new or changing priorities, without jeopardising existing achievements. The application of those values/principles should aim to consolidate these achievements, but should not be constrained by the

- perspectives of previous policy.
- Take account of recent reports that deal with cultural diversity issues, including the 1995 National Multicultural Advisory Council report *Multicultural Australia: the Next Steps, Towards and Beyond 2000*.
- Engage the community in discussion, particularly at the local community level, to ensure effective input to policy development and a better understanding by Australians of how diversity within a common structure can enhance national unity.
- Keep the Minister informed of progress, particularly in relation to any major developments.

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Background

To assist the Council in preparing this report to Government on the way forward for multicultural policy, the Council undertook wide-ranging consultative processes.

In May 1997, Irving Saulwick and Associates were commissioned to conduct a qualitative survey on community attitudes on immigration and multicultural issues.

This involved a two-pronged approach:

- research discussions using focus groups in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and a range of prominent individuals;
- development of a communication strategy paper.

The research revealed that despite their personal commitment to Australia and intellectual sophistication, participants wrestled with the meaning of the term 'multiculturalism' and some seriously doubted the worth of continuing with it.

Saulwick also recommended that a targeted communication strategy be undertaken to reassure people that they were being heard and that their views were being taken seriously. Information sessions were recommended for opinion leaders and the media.

In December 1997, the Council released an Issues Paper – *Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward* to stimulate community discussion and encourage input to assist the Council in its work. Interested individuals and organisations were invited to participate in the process.

One hundred and sixty four submissions were received in response to the Issues Paper. Many of the comments in the submissions derived from well-known polarised positions referred to in the Issues Paper – either supportive or critical of current Government policy. Approximately 70 per cent of respondents were in favour of retaining multiculturalism, both as a term and a policy, and 30 per cent expressed criticism or were opposed to it.

Further, Council members have accepted numerous invitations to speak to the media and to attend seminars and meetings to consult with a wide cross-section of the community. This dialogue has included meeting representatives of other advisory Councils working in related areas, eg the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, the Multicultural Advisory Committees of both the Australia Council and the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, the Australian Citizenship Council and the Civics Education Group; discussions at business forums, a workshop organised by the Australian Multicultural Foundation and the de Bono Foundation, meetings with representatives of community service organisations, schools, universities, business organisations and councils, religious, social and sporting bodies, women's groups; the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and several of its State and regional constituent councils, State and Territory Ethnic or Multicultural Commissions; and attendance

at numerous cultural functions and community meetings. The Council has also held discussions with senior Federal politicians from both the Government and the Opposition and individual members have met with several others at Federal, State, Territory and Local Government levels.

Summary of community views on the way forward for multicultural policy

Government departments

Submissions from government departments were generally supportive of the continuation of multiculturalism as a term and policy for managing Australia's cultural diversity.

Their submissions focussed on how they are taking an active role in the promotion of cultural diversity by addressing the needs of all individuals in their organisations through a range of culturally sensitive policies and programs.

Many contributors stated that multiculturalism has had bipartisan political support over the past twenty-five years and has served Australia well, particularly in view of the rapidly changing nature of the migrant intake over this period. One submission stated:

[The success of multiculturalism] is recognised internationally. Far more importantly, most Australians recognise and are proud of the success with which our cultural diversity has been 'managed' – a justifiable pride because that success has been made possible, at least partly, by the Australian character. (Western Australian Government)

Ethnic bodies

Ethnic bodies generally argued that multiculturalism is a reality and exists in every aspect of our daily life. It is for all Australians. Any attempt to abandon the policy may result in the loss of the achievements of the past two decades.

Submissions from this sector of the community also emphasised that multiculturalism demands from all Australians a commitment to Australia, its institutions and its values, such as Parliamentary democracy, freedom of expression and the equality of the sexes.

Further, there was general agreement that Australia is internationally recognised and regarded as a role model for a culturally diverse, stable and cohesive society. These bodies also noted that there is considerable economic and social advantage in harnessing the skills and talents available in our culturally diverse society.

Business

The Council was disappointed that few submissions were received from the business sector. The few that were received were supportive of multiculturalism. They focussed on how best to use the skills of Australians from all backgrounds in order to meet the needs of rapidly changing global markets.

Academia/Professionals

This sector of the community generally argued that multiculturalism can best be conveyed to the public as a long-established and highly beneficial aspect of Australian life. They saw greater ethnic diversity over the past fifty years

as strengthening our capacity to interact successfully in an increasingly cosmopolitan world and considered diversity to be an asset that needs to be valued and promoted in public policy.

Many of the submissions identified opportunities for education and communication which would, in time, break down barriers. There was much support for a targeted communication strategy which would reach the wider community, both intellectually and emotionally, and would address misrepresentations and misunderstandings.

A clear message from the submissions was that Australia is a cultural democracy, where differences in history and experience should be recognised and valued.

Individuals

The Issues Paper drew mixed responses from individuals in the community.

Supporters tended to view multiculturalism as a powerful cohesive force for this nation; a policy which promotes fairness and unity. They saw cultural diversity as contributing to Australia's economic and social development and maturity.

Others expressed diverse views; some were ambivalent and others were openly sceptical about its objectives and relevance for Australian society. The latter saw the policy of assimilation as effective and desirable, believing that the Australian life-style is the core of our society, onto which other cultures may be grafted. Multiculturalism, in their view, is a negative and divisive feature of Australian society.

Summary of responses to questions posed in the Issues Paper

Government's role

A significant proportion of respondents agreed that governments should continue to have active policies on cultural diversity. They indicated that Government policies should lead the way towards achieving what is best in the national interest:

Governments have a symbolic and a real responsibility to formulate policies on cultural diversity, to implement programs to enable the evolution of a diverse society and to pass laws that will ensure that all 'citizens' regardless of race, ethnicity, place of birth, language or religion will enjoy equality. (Josie Black, VIC)

In order to maintain a harmonious and socially cohesive society, there must be consistent messages and actions from government promoting multiculturalism. (Office of Ethnic and Multicultural Affairs, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, QLD)

Equality and equity for all Australians must remain the keystone of community life, and are the responsibility of governments at least to work for, if not guarantee. (Rev Jim Houston, VIC)

People embrace things which appear to address their needs and reject things they think favour others at their expense. We must also be sure that policy is more than rhetoric. If 'fair go' is inherent in the policy then we must put such values into practice ... If we say we welcome and embrace cultural diversity then we have to

behave in ways that show that we do. We have to be sure that this diversity is reflected in policy documents.
(Dr Maureen H Fitzgerald, NSW)

Among the reasons for opposing government involvement in this area were suggestions that there is already ‘too much social engineering’ in today’s society.

Role of political and community leaders

Many respondents stated that active leadership from political and community leaders is essential in the interests of social cohesion. They said that Australian leaders must instill pride in the community; must have vision and be able to communicate this vision. Respondents urged strong and unambiguous statements on multiculturalism from both sides of politics to reassure, encourage and lead multicultural Australia into the future.

An emerging theme regarding the role of political and community leaders was that they must:

demonstrate equally – leadership and advocacy. (Dr James Jupp, ACT)

set example and be the role models of how all ‘citizens’ should behave, in a way which shows respect and pride in fellow citizens. (Australian Arabic Council, VIC)

Democratic institutions

Feedback from the community clearly reflected a strong belief that our democratic institutions and traditions are the foundations upon which our society is built. The institutions of Australian democracy exist for all Australians and are one reason

why so many people continue to choose Australia as their home. It is because of these solid foundations that multiculturalism has been able to develop and flourish:

The institutions of democracy underlie all policy, programs and practice in Australia and they are therefore central to policies for multiculturalism. (Australian National University, Department of Linguistics, ACT)

The role of the institutions of Australian democracy can best be recognised by emphasising their importance in any policy statements on ‘multiculturalism’. And it will be necessary to spell out in detail what these democratic institutions are and why they have been, and remain, critical to a just and equitable society. It may also require education of both young people and the wider community. (Office of Ethnic Affairs, Department of the Chief Minister, NT)

There was also a view that, on the basis that we live in a democratic society, multicultural policy is not required:

The principles of democracy and rule of law are important to protect the interests of all people in Australia, with anti-racism and anti-discrimination principles enshrined in the law. It is true that Australian society itself embodies traditions of fair play and tolerance and that these core values and principles, coupled with our institutions and laws, should constitute sufficient basis for a sound society. (Peter Bastaja, NSW)

Further, there was widely held recognition that the democratic foundations of our society contain a balance of rights and

obligations. This included a clear appreciation that the freedoms that are available to us need to be balanced with a commitment to accept and contribute to the civic life of the community and that these obligations extend to all Australians.

The Saulwick research reported a firm view that migrants should be prepared to live under the one law, which means accepting Australia's core values and institutions.

Achievements of earlier generations

On the question of how the achievements of earlier generations of Australians should be best acknowledged in multicultural policies, most respondents commented on a need for a good understanding of Australian history, including facing this history honestly. This was perceived as crucial to understanding present society.

While many people acknowledged the importance of accepting Australia's core democratic institutions, there was a lack of understanding about how these institutions arose or how the contributions of earlier generations of Australians ought to be recognised. Some stated, however, that honest teaching of Australian history will in itself acknowledge the achievements of earlier generations, and in a way which will underline the multicultural history of our nation.

Reconciliation and multiculturalism

Responses to the question about indigenous cultures and reconciliation in Australia's diverse society identified clear support for reconciliation and recognition of the special place of indigenous people. The following responses were typical:

Any reaffirmation of multiculturalism should make clear that our collective responsibility for past events and future reconciliation extends to all of us, no matter where we come from or when we arrived. It should also be linked to a statement of the continued special status of Aboriginal people as the original owners of Australia. (Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales)

The Reconciliation process for Aboriginal People involves reconciliation with the family, the community and the land. This understanding can be a unifying force for all Australians no matter their origins. (Ecumenical Migration Centre, VIC)

Multiculturalism for all Australians

The Council's consultation process provided mixed messages as to whether multiculturalism is for all Australians. For some it is already an inclusive policy:

To take multiculturalism, for instance, if it seems to be simply a matter of providing special benefits to migrants, or more narrowly still, non-English-speaking background migrants, it will defeat its own purpose. There is, of course, the realm of settlement services, but this is not multiculturalism in the sense of viable, inclusive national politics. Multiculturalism must include the descendants of the English, Irish, Scots, Welsh, New Zealanders, Americans and so on, as ethnic groups no less than any other group. (Prof Mary Kalantzis/Dr Bill Cope, VIC)

Multiculturalism is a reality. It exists in every aspect of our daily existence. It should not even be an issue for debate. It is for all Australians and defines who we are. Any attempt to abandon the term 'multiculturalism' carries with it the very real danger of appearing to abandon the principles which underpin it. The achievements of the last twenty-five years would be lost. (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Inc)

Others said that multiculturalism relates only to migrants from a non-English-speaking background:

I do not feel Multiculturalism relates to me as an Australian. I do feel it negates my own Australian heritage and culture ... It does not embrace those Australians of Anglo-Saxon background whose heritage it dismisses as irrelevant and pushes aside for newer cultures. (Janice G Pavils, SA)

There are those who perceived the implementation of multiculturalism as morally right in our diverse community. These respondents stated that in order to participate equally in society and have equal access to the fruits of the society, some groups need more assistance than others.

Saulwick's research identified a strong desire for unity in this country. He showed that the concept of multiculturalism raised in many minds an emphasis on separateness rather than togetherness. In contrast to this, as one respondent explained, people want a country in which many cultures, races and backgrounds 'live together under the one rule'.

Saulwick found that migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds are accepted, but that acceptance is qualified. The more these people are like 'us', or become like 'us', the more readily they are accepted. Many respondents were critical of migrants who live in geographically closed communities. While they recognised that there is a natural tendency for people from the same background to be together, Saulwick found that many respondents are impatient with it; they see it as inhibiting integration.

Social harmony

Submissions pointed out that loyalty and commitment to the basic structures and principles of our society are necessary for social harmony. The importance of social harmony was widely appreciated in the community:

It is by ensuring that *all* Australians have equal opportunity to partake of the wealth of our society that commitment by all Australians to this nation is ensured, and that social harmony is fostered. (Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW Inc)

The shared values underpinning social cohesion revolve around being Australian and everyone being, and seen to be, treated equally at all times under all circumstances... We need to emphasise social cohesion as the priority, not cultural diversity. (Ian Finlayson, QLD)

Saulwick found that Australians are, in the main, quite open people who feel that they live in an open society; and that

this is one of Australia's greatest strengths. However, respondents agreed that the subject of race is one which can easily give offence and which has acquired a patina of political correctness. Saulwick suggested that this demonstrated that Australian society has moved towards a greater degree of tolerance and acceptance.

Shared values

Community consultation showed that Australians generally agree about the attributes of a fair and just society and give credit to Australia as being such a society. Commonly stated shared values included such traditional notions as a *fair go*, democracy, the rule of law and equality. Other submissions noted the importance of community, respect for the intrinsic worth of all individuals, the place of common-sense, and the nexus between freedom and responsibility. (DA Hunt, SA)

Saulwick identified a feeling in the community that we have a set of values and a way of living in this country, which we have inherited from our European, and more particularly, British forebears. People holding this view considered that those who come here to live ought to be prepared to fit in with this value system rather than to expect it to change.

Some commentators pointed to a tension inherent in the evolving nature of shared values, vis-a-vis the fixed nature of core values. One respondent warned:

There are dangers in any talk about a set of Australian 'core values', for we must be on guard to ensure that no deviations occur towards any

formula privileging one set of 'traditional' or 'mainstream' values and beliefs (essentially the old 'British heritage' ones, of the kind espoused by Blainey in 1984) at the expense of our minority groups, especially Aboriginals. (Racial Respect, ACT)

National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia

Submissions were largely positive about the relevance of the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* for future multicultural policy and its implementation framework. There was, however, a perception that multiculturalism has been misrepresented and misunderstood by some members of the Australian community.

The term 'multiculturalism'

In discussing the appropriateness of the term 'multiculturalism', views were polarised. Respondents who had a problem with the term tended to be those who opposed the underlying concepts. Changing the name of the policy may, therefore, not necessarily result in greater acceptance.

The word multicultural has never been clearly defined to the Australian public hence there is confusion, uncertainty and suspicion as to the implications and possible political agenda. (Louise Samways, VIC)

Saulwick's research provided an explanation for some of the negative attitudes towards multiculturalism. He pointed out that people were feeling alienated and that this expressed itself in a 'them and us' attitude. In some cases this negativity led to views opposed to immigration and multiculturalism.

Saulwick found that across all social classes, age groups and regions, people were concerned about Australia's future and some were pessimistic about it. The sense of having been left out and marginalised was stronger among blue-collar workers, older people and those in country areas.

In those submissions calling for change, a common theme was that multiculturalism, as a term, should not be retained because it is perceived that the policy gives migrants rights and privileges that are not available to other Australians. Many of them, however, wanted the integrity of multiculturalism to be kept intact.

Some respondents stated that they did not support multiculturalism as a policy or as a term to describe Australian society, but presented views that seemed to agree with the principles behind multicultural policy.

Globalisation and productive diversity

Many submissions supported multiculturalism, believing that Australia should concentrate on the management of diversity in the interests of the whole community. They said the country must grasp the unique opportunity offered by the globalisation of markets and communication systems. Some respondents expanded on this point to argue that Australia should harness the linguistic and cultural advantages that our diverse society offers:

... multiculturalism is not only crucial to achieving a socially cohesive society in Australia, it is a philosophy that will need to be increasingly adopted if we are to cope with the world becoming

more of a 'global village' ... we need to act to reinforce and expand the key features of Australian multiculturalism, both for our society and as an example internationally. (Dr Andrew Theophanous MP, VIC)

Australia has gained and continues to gain international recognition in many aspects of its relationships with the rest of the world for its policy of multiculturalism. If we step back from and dissipate the policy in any way now, that recognition and the resulting status within the global community will be lost. (Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council Inc, NSW)

Summary

In summary, on the one hand, respondents saw multiculturalism as something to be proud of and necessary for the maintenance of harmony in modern-day Australia. They stated that multiculturalism should not be put aside and that governments should actively promote it. Multiculturalism was seen not only as crucial to achieving a socially cohesive society in Australia, but also a philosophy that will need to be increasingly adopted in the future if we are to continue to interact globally. These respondents considered that the key features of multiculturalism needed to be promoted domestically and internationally.

On the other hand, respondents were uncomfortable with the term 'multiculturalism' and doubted its worth. They saw the policy as contributing to a general sense of unease; of separatism and divisiveness. Some had

the perception that migrants are given special rights and privileges that are not available to other Australians; a negativity which appeared to stem from their interpretation of multiculturalism as policy for migrants only.

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⁹ Some organisations have changed their titles since lodging submissions. In all cases, titles that were current at the time of lodging have been used. Also, some contributors, although using organisational letterhead, indicated that the submission was a personal one.

Hugh L Hyland, WA	John Ridd, QLD
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Organisations

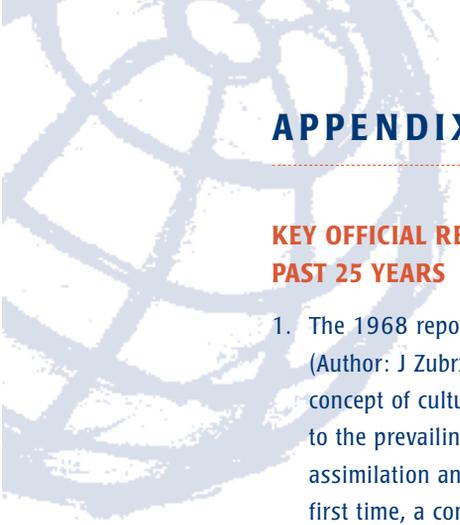
Adult Multicultural Education Services and Australian Council of TESOL Assns, VIC
 ANGLICARE NSW – Migrant Services
 Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales
 Australian Arabic Council, VIC
 Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, ACT
 Australian Catholic University, NSW
 Australia-China Friendship Society, NSW
 Australian Chinese Community Association of New South Wales Inc
 Australia Council for the Arts
 Australia First Party, VIC
 Australian National University, Department of Linguistics, ACT
 Australian Sports Commission
 Australian Teacher Education Association, Central Queensland University
 Baptist Churches of New South Wales
 Blacktown and Mt Druitt Migrant Interagency, NSW
 B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission, VIC
 Buddhist Council of Victoria Inc

Cabramatta Community Centre, NSW
Centrelink
Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association Inc, NSW
Chinese Australian Forum, NSW
Chinese Australian Services Society Co-operative Ltd, NSW
Chinese Christian Church of Victoria
Coffs Harbour Multicultural Access and Resource Service (MARS) Inc, NSW
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 Communications and the Arts
 Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
 Health and Family Services
 Industry, Science and Tourism
 Workplace Relations and Small Business
 Veterans' Affairs
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Country Women's Association of Western Australia (Inc)
Curtin University of Technology, WA
Ecumenical Migration Centre, VIC
Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales
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Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW Inc
Ethnic Communities Council of the Northern Territory Inc
Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland Ltd
Ethnic Communities Council of Tasmania and Tasmanians Against Racism
Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
Ethnic Communities Council of Wagga Wagga Inc, NSW
Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia
Executive Council of Australian Jewry, NSW
Fairfield Migrant Interagency, NSW
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Inc
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, NSW
Greek Senior Citizens Club, Red Hill and Mornington Peninsula, VIC
Greek Welfare Centre, NSW
Hewlett-Packard Australia
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council Inc, NSW
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW Inc
Inner West Ethnic Network, NSW
Language and Society Centre, Monash University, VIC
Law Society of New South Wales
Lightning Ridge and Region Transcultural Community Council, NSW



Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, NSW
Metal Trades Industry Association
Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region Ltd, NSW
Moreland City Council, VIC
Multicultural Communities Council of SA Inc
Multicultural Interest Group, Speech Pathology (VIC Branch)
National Catholic Education Commission, ACT
National Film and Sound Archive
NSW Adult Migrant English Service
NSW Association of Multicultural Education
NSW MRC Forum
NSW Multicultural Arts Alliance
Office of Ethnic Affairs, Dept of the Chief Minister, NT
Office of Ethnic and Multicultural Affairs, Dept of the Premier and Cabinet, QLD
Racial Respect, ACT
Returned & Services League of Australia Limited
SA Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission
Special Broadcasting Service Corporation
Telstra
Victorian Arabic Network Inc
Western Australian Government

2 submissions were submitted unsigned, 1 wished to remain anonymous.



APPENDIX C

KEY OFFICIAL REPORTS OF THE PAST 25 YEARS

1. The 1968 report *The Questing Years* (Author: J Zubrzycki) highlighted the concept of cultural pluralism in contrast to the prevailing theoretical concepts of assimilation and integration. For the first time, a conceptual link was established between equity and cultural pluralism by identifying problem areas of the migrant settlement experience and by discussing alternative approaches to migrant settlement. The report reviewed a number of issues including the obstacles faced by migrant children in the education process, unskilled migrants in the workforce, non-recognition of overseas and trade qualifications, and residential segregation and housing.
2. The July 1973 report of the *Inquiry into the Departure of Settlers* from Australia by the Immigration Advisory Council's Committee on Social Patterns (Chairman: J Zubrzycki) was tabled in Parliament. In recommending remedial action the Committee focussed on a range of settlement services to be provided by government and community groups.
3. The 1977 report *Australia as a Multicultural Society* by the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (Chairman: J Zubrzycki) contained the first definition of multiculturalism, as resting on the three principles of social cohesion, equality of opportunity and cultural identity, and the policy guidelines derived from these principles.
4. The 1978 *Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services to Migrants* (Chairman: F Galbally) represented a watershed in the development of multicultural policy. It identified multiculturalism as a key concept in formulating Government policies in relation to programs and services for migrants and spelled out four guiding principles: equality of opportunity and equal access to programs and services for all; the right of all Australians to maintain their culture 'without prejudice or disadvantage'; the need for special services and programs for migrants to 'ensure equality of access and provision'; and the principle of 'full consultation with clients' with encouragement of self-help for migrants to become self-reliant as quickly as possible.

The Report's 57 recommendations addressed the twin issues of equity and cultural maintenance in settlement services, English language teaching to adults and children, translation services, migrant resource centres and grant-in-aid programs to community groups. It also foreshadowed the development of ethnic television and the establishment of the Institute of Multicultural Affairs.
5. In June 1979 the Australian Population Council (Chairman: W D Borrie) and the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (Chairman: J Zubrzycki) jointly produced a report, *Multiculturalism and its Implications for Immigration Policy*. The report canvassed some of the concepts and practices involved in

multiculturalism, traced some aspects of the evolution of Australia towards a plural society, and set out its views on the desired conditions for building a multicultural society in Australia and on its relationship to immigration policy – which the report expressed in terms of serving the national interest. The report recognised that multiculturalism is dynamic and expressed the conviction of both Councils that its development should take place within the framework of existing Parliamentary institutions and with due regard to social and political rights and obligations.

6. In 1979, the Ethnic Television Review Panel in its ***Interim Report of Public Consultations on the Establishment of an Ethnic Television Service*** stated that ethnic television would be valuable to all Australians by promoting tolerance and appreciation of the diverse, multicultural nature of our society, and would also assist ethnic groups to maintain and develop their cultural identity.
7. The 1980 report of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs ***Review of Multicultural and Migrant Education*** (Chairman: F Galbally) commented on the fundamental role of education in the development of multiculturalism. The report stressed that education in Australia should embrace the teaching of English as a second language, the teaching of community languages and studies of ethnic and cultural diversity in Australia.
8. The 1982 report ***Multiculturalism for All Australians: Our Developing Nationhood*** of the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs (Chairman: J Zubrzycki) expressed the view that the days when multiculturalism was discussed exclusively in the context of ‘ethnic affairs’, defined ‘as something concerned with non-English-speaking minorities in Australia are over’.
- It saw social cohesion as the key, with multiculturalism being the interaction between cultural minority groups and the wider Australian society. The report stressed the notion of inclusiveness and opposed a situation where minority groups ‘flourish on the margin at the expense of the total Australian society’.
9. The 1982 ***Evaluation of Post-Arrival Programs and Services*** by the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (Chairman: F Galbally) found an impressive record of implementation of the findings of the 1978 *Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services to Migrants*. The evaluation concluded that the report had been of substantial benefit to: migrants, both newly arrived and longer resident; Australia’s ethnic groups; and the community as a whole. It found that Australia has ‘perhaps the most comprehensive system of migrant and multicultural services in the world. In several key areas, Australian provisions are unique’.
10. The 1986 report ***Don’t Settle for Less*** of the Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services (Chairman: J Jupp) included

four basic principles as the basis for the policies of the Federal Government:

- All members of the community should have equitable opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the nation.
- Equitable access to, and an equitable share of, resources which governments manage on behalf of the community.
- Equal opportunity to participate in and influence government policies, programs and services.
- Rights, within the law, to enjoy one's own culture, practise one's own religion, use one's own language while respecting the right of others to their own culture, religion and language.

11. The 1986 report of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, ***Future Directions for Multiculturalism***, emphasised a range of recommendations to reform government agencies and services and make them more accessible to people of all cultures. The report identified significant social and economic inequalities disproportionately experienced by non-English-speaking background people. It supported the findings made in the Jupp Report and recommended that an extended 'access and equity' strategy should be subject to public scrutiny and include people of non-English-speaking background, the disabled, women, and indigenous people.

12. The 1988 report by the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies ***Immigration: a Commitment***

to Australia (Chairman: S FitzGerald) argued that the official definition of multiculturalism did not correspond with the popular concept of it. The report concluded that 'confusion and mistrust of multiculturalism, focussing on the suspicion that it drove immigration policy, was very broadly articulated. Many people, from a variety of occupational and cultural backgrounds, perceived it as divisive. The majority of these people also expressed concerns about immigrants' commitment to Australia and to Australian principles and institutions'. The report recommended a coherent philosophy of immigration as the Committee saw mistrust and failing consensus threatening community support for immigration.

13. In 1989, following wide community consultations and drawing on the advice of the Advisory Council for Multicultural Affairs (Chairman: Sir James Gobbo), the Government produced the ***National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*** which had, and continues to have, bipartisan political support. It defined the fundamental principles of multiculturalism based on three rights (expressed as dimensions) and three limits (based on obligations). In summary these are:

- The **right** to cultural identity (expressing and sharing one's individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion); social justice (equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race,

ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth); and economic efficiency (the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians).

- The **obligation** to have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost; to accept the basic structures and principles of Australia; and to accept that the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values.

14. The 1995 National Multicultural Advisory Council report, ***Multicultural Australia – the Next Steps – Towards and Beyond 2000*** (Chairman: the Hon. Mick Young), confirmed that the fundamental tenets of the 1989 *National Agenda* were still relevant. The Council's report aimed at furthering the development of an inclusive, tolerant and globally competitive Australian society by including the issues of Aboriginal reconciliation, national identity, global and regional forces, information technology, religious diversity, and sectoral challenges.

APPENDIX D

KEY COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND TERRITORY MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS AGENCIES¹⁰

Department of Immigration and
Multicultural Affairs

PO Box 25
Belconnen ACT 2616
Tel: 02 6264 1111
Fax: 02 6264 1073

Ethnic Affairs Commission of
New South Wales
164–174 Liverpool Road
ASHFIELD NSW 2131
(PO Box 1266, ASHFIELD NSW 1800)
Tel: 02 9716 2222
Fax: 02 9798 3860

Victorian Multicultural Commission
1 Treasury Place
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
Tel: 03 9651 6884
Fax: 03 9651 2624

Multicultural Affairs Unit
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Level 3, 1 Macarthur Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3002
Tel: 03 9651 6465
Fax: 03 9651 5944

Multicultural Affairs Queensland
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Level 1, 61 Mary Street
BRISBANE QLD 4001
(PO Box 185, BRISBANE ALBERT ST
QLD 4002)
Tel: 07 3224 5690
Fax: 07 3224 5691

South Australian Multicultural and
Ethnic Affairs Commission
24 Flinders Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Tel: 08 8226 1947
Fax: 08 8226 1979

Office of Multicultural and
International Affairs
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
24 Flinders Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Tel: 08 8226 1944
Fax: 08 8226 1955

Office of Citizenship
and Multicultural Interests
2nd Floor, 81 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000
Tel: 08 9426 8690
Fax: 08 9426 8691

Office of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 123B
HOBART TAS 7001
Tel: 03 6233 3439
Fax: 03 6223 8663

Office of Ethnic Affairs
Department of the Chief Minister
Ground Floor, Palm Court
8 Cavenagh Street
DARWIN NT 0800
(GPO Box 1222, DARWIN NT 0801)
Tel: 08 8999 7332
Fax: 08 8999 5482

Office of Multicultural and
International Affairs
Chief Minister's Department
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Tel: 02 6207 0555
Fax: 02 6207 5862

¹⁰ As at January 1999.

APPENDIX E

RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY

One of the issues the Council was asked to consider was terminology, of which the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘multiculturalism’ are the most important, and are covered in part 2.2. Many other terms are discussed throughout the report. For instance:

- assimilation (part 1.2);
- integration (part 1.2);
- settlement (part 1.2);
- the three dimensions of the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*: cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency (parts 1.2 and 1.3);
- Australian democracy (part 2.4);
- ‘citizenship’ (part 2.4);
- inclusiveness (part 2.6);
- reconciliation (part 2.6).

Additional terms are covered below.

Ethnicity

The dictionary definition of ‘ethnic’ is ‘pertaining to race; originating from a specified racial, linguistic etc. group (usually a minority)’. The term is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning ‘nation’. In this generic interpretation, all people are ‘ethnic’, in the sense that we all originate from one or more racial or linguistic group. Common language, however, does not generally use the term ‘ethnic’ to refer to people of a majority group which, in the case of Australia, comprises the people who wholly or substantially originate from Great Britain or Ireland. Nor is it necessarily appropriate to label these people as having an ‘Anglo’, ‘Anglo-Celtic’ or ‘Anglo-Australian’ ethnicity. If any individual wishes to claim such an ethnicity, this is their choice. Equally,

if people describe themselves as having no ethnicity or having an Australian ethnicity, this too is their choice, which ought to be respected by others.

On the other hand, for many Australians their ethnicity is central to their personal sense of identity. They see ethnicity as embracing their culture. On this understanding, an ethnic group is one that is sufficiently identifiable by a combination of shared customs, beliefs, traditions and other characteristics such as race, language, national origin, religious affiliation and a common past.

Ethnicity is essentially a private matter. It has no relevance to a person’s civic rights and obligations. Ethnicity is, however, a useful notion to describe some aspects of the human diversity of Australia and has been effectively used for these purposes.

Recently there has been a trend to replace the term ‘ethnic’ with ‘multicultural’ in the names of government bodies and community councils. The April 1999 decision by New South Wales to rename the Ethnic Affairs Commission as the Community Relations Commission is consistent with this trend. While such a change may not be appropriate for all bodies that use ethnic in their name, the use of the term ‘multicultural’ does reflect the Council’s desire to promote Australian multiculturalism as inclusive of the whole community. Inclusiveness does not mean weakening the interests of minority ethnic groups but rather highlighting their contribution to the whole community and supporting their interaction with majority groups on a fair and equitable basis.

In relation to multicultural policy, the term ‘ethnic’ has largely been used to describe individuals and groups who originate

from countries other than Great Britain and Ireland, especially those who have a non-English-speaking background. The most notable examples of this usage have been the various State Ethnic Community Councils, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and several State and Territory Ethnic Affairs Commissions.

The Council recognises that the use of the term 'ethnic' has been and continues to be entirely appropriate in the context of multicultural policy. It focuses on the special needs of non-English-speaking communities and their potential for both advocacy and service delivery.

An unintended outcome of the use of the term 'ethnic' is that it has given rise to the use by some of the term 'mainstream' to describe the non-ethnic majority. The Council strongly rejects such use of the term 'mainstream' as it suggests a two-class society which would be entirely un-Australian. Mainstream Australia comprises all Australians whatever their ethnicity and is, in fact, multi-ethnic or, in the terminology preferred in this report, multicultural which acknowledges all forms of cultural diversity, ethnic or otherwise.

Migrant

The terms 'migrant' and 'immigrant' refer to a person who has migrated to live here permanently. While it is most accurate to use these terms to refer to people still involved in the immigration process until they are eligible for Australian Citizenship, common usage in Australia does not restrict the terms to any particular time period. It is important to note that most

migrants become Australian Citizens, and all have rights and obligations as members of the Australian community as 'citizens'.

NESB

The acronym NESB stands for non-English-speaking background. It is used to describe someone whose first language is not English or whose cultural background is derived from a non-English-speaking tradition.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs, in its January 1996 report *A Fair Go For All – Report on Migrant Access and Equity*, raised concerns that the designator 'NESB' was too broad a term to be a useful tool for designing services that match people's particular needs and circumstances. In response, the Council of Ministers for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs agreed in May 1996 that an alternative approach was required and that the term and acronym 'NESB' be dropped, where possible, from all official communications. The term 'Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds', or a variation of it, can be used as an alternative, although the Ministerial Council suggested that it not be used in acronym form.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is working with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Multicultural Affairs Unit of the Victorian Premier's Department to develop a new set of indicators of cultural and linguistic diversity to replace non-English-speaking background. This work is, in the first instance, for the consideration of the Ministerial Council.

APPENDIX F

Privileges and responsibilities of Australian citizenship¹¹

Civic privileges/responsibilities

- Australian Citizens can enrol to vote at Commonwealth, State and Territory elections and referendums. (Note that voting is also available to British subjects who were enrolled to vote on 26 January 1984.)
- Australian Citizens can stand for election at Commonwealth, State and Territory level (subject to section 44 of the Constitution).
- In both Territories and most States, voting and standing for election at local government level is restricted to Australian Citizens. (Note that voting is also available to British subjects who were enrolled to vote on 26 January 1984.)
- Australian Citizens can serve on juries. (Note that jury service is also available to British subjects who were enrolled to vote on 26 January 1984.)

General privileges/responsibilities

- Australian Citizens can obtain an Australian passport and, therefore, leave and re-enter Australia without a visa. Australian permanent residents require a resident return visa if they wish to return to Australia after a period of time overseas.
- Australian Citizens can obtain permanent employment in the Australian Public Service.

- Australian Citizens can be employed in the Australian Defence Forces. (Note that Australian permanent residents who are in the process of obtaining Australian Citizenship, or who are eligible for Australian Citizenship, may obtain employment in the Australian Defence Forces contingent on their acquiring Australian Citizenship.)
- Australian Citizens can register a child under 18 years of age born to them overseas, as an Australian Citizen by descent.
- Persons who acquired Australian Citizenship by birth cannot be deprived of this Citizenship and cannot be deported from Australia. Persons who acquired Australian Citizenship by grant can only be deprived of this Citizenship and be removed from Australia in strictly limited circumstances (eg where fraud was involved in their migration to Australia or their acquisition of Australian Citizenship). Australian permanent residents can be deported from Australia in some circumstances.

Educational privileges

- Australian Citizens have the choice to pay Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees up-front with discount, or defer payment. (Note that this option is also available to: permanent resident students who became permanent residents before 1 January 1996; students who started their course of study before 1 January 1996; permanent resident students who became permanent

¹¹ As at December 1998.

residents and started their course of study on or after 1 January 1996 and have been permanent residents for less than 1 year; New Zealand Citizens who started their course before 1996 and have been resident in Australia for a continuous period of at least 2 years.)

- Students who met the requirements for Australian Citizenship over 1 year ago but have not become Australian Citizens must pay HECS fees up-front with no discount (effective 2 January 1999).

Privileges relating to migration

- Under the Family Stream of the Migration Program, priority in immigration processing is given to spouses, dependent children, fiance(e)s and interdependent partners of sponsors in Australia. Within these categories, higher priority is given to people sponsored by Australian Citizens.
- Applicants for migration who are subject to the points test currently, and until 1 July 1999, receive more points if sponsored by a person who has been an Australian Citizen for over 5 years than if sponsored by a person who has been an Australian Citizen for less than 5 years.

APPENDIX G

CHARTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SOCIETY

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Commonwealth's *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*.

This *Charter* integrates a set of service principles concerning cultural diversity into mainstream service planning, delivery, evaluation and outcomes reporting.

The development of the *Charter* has been consistent with the Government's commitment to implement a Federal access and equity strategy in consultation with other levels of government. The *Charter* has been endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and by the Australian Local Government Association, and so represents a nationally consistent approach to the delivery of culturally responsive government services.

Most jurisdictions are already pursuing policies and programs consistent with the *Charter*. At the Commonwealth level there has been considerable progress in ensuring that mainstream government services are planned and delivered with cultural diversity considerations in mind. The result is that services are better able to meet the needs of all Australians.

This commitment to providing responsive and inclusive services is at the heart of the Government's public service reform agenda. The *Charter* is, therefore, related to other initiatives on Government Service Charters, Workplace Diversity and Productive Diversity.

I recommend that all government officials and others involved in the design and delivery of government services to the community become familiar with this document. It provides a key tool for ensuring all government services meet the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse society.

(signed)

Philip Ruddock
Minister for Immigration and
Multicultural Affairs
June 1998

Introduction

Access and equity policies aim to ensure that government services meet the needs of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds so that they can participate fully in economic, social and cultural life. The importance of these policies has been recognised at Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local Government levels.

The Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision has considered performance indicators which, amongst other things, reflect access and equity components of service delivery. In 1995, the Council of Ministers for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs agreed that increased efforts in access and equity were required by Australian governments.

Establishing a framework for best practice in culturally responsive service delivery

A principal reform objective in OECD countries is to strengthen a customer-service orientation in public institutions. Charters of customer service provide a clear framework against which the effectiveness of service delivery can be monitored. They have been developed by private sector organisations, and Government Service Charters are being adopted in the public sector.

The Commonwealth access and equity strategy is being expressed in terms of this *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, aimed at ensuring government services meet the particular needs of users and achieve

intended outcomes for them. In a culturally diverse society like Australia it means making services culturally appropriate, accessible, consumer-oriented and effective.

Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society

The *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* represents a new approach to access and equity. Too often access and equity have been an after-thought, an add on if service providers are aware of the difficulties people from different language and cultural backgrounds can face in accessing Government services and getting results from them. The *Charter* places the emphasis on building these cultural diversity considerations into the strategic planning, policy development, budgeting and reporting processes of government service delivery – irrespective of whether these services are provided by government agencies, community organisations or commercial enterprises. (The access and equity strategy has never been applied to government business enterprises such as Telstra and Australia Post, and it is not proposed to do so now. The strong customer service orientation of these bodies should ensure they service the needs of their diverse clientele.)

The *Charter* summarises seven principles central to the design, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of quality government services in a culturally diverse society: these are **access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability**. A set of practical implementation and monitoring strategies

is appended to the *Charter* to provide best practice guidance to government service providers on implementation and reporting.

Some of the strategies may be considered pertinent to more than one principle. For instance, cultural diversity training for staff can facilitate not only the development of non-discriminatory services (access) but also improvements in the way clients are treated (equity) and the sensitivity of services to the needs of diverse clients (responsiveness).

The formulation of these seven principles, and the related guidelines, has taken into account Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Government statements on service delivery in a culturally diverse society. Consequently, the principles and associated strategies constitute a genuinely Federal framework for delivering culturally responsive government services that can be consistently applied across all levels of government.

This framework is intended to commit all Government service providers to integrating the *Charter's* seven principles into their strategic planning, policy and corporate reporting processes so that the services they provide enable Australians of all backgrounds to have the opportunity to achieve their potential and participate fully in our society.

The principles

1. Access

Government services should be available to everyone who is entitled to them and should be free of any form of discrimination irrespective of a person's country of birth, language, culture, race or religion.

2. Equity

Government services should be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them.

3. Communication

Government service providers should use strategies to inform eligible clients of services and their entitlements and how they can obtain them. Providers should also consult with their clients regularly about the adequacy, design and standard of government services.

4. Responsiveness

Government services should be sensitive to the needs and requirements of clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals.

5. Effectiveness

Government service providers should be 'results oriented', focussed on meeting the needs of clients from all backgrounds.

6. Efficiency

Government service providers should optimise the use of available public resources through a user-responsive approach to service delivery which meets the needs of clients.

7. Accountability

Government service providers should have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures they are accountable for implementing Charter objectives for clients (for example, by reporting on this in annual reports or other types of report).

Best practice strategies for achieving and reporting on government services in a culturally diverse society

The following implementation and reporting strategies are not intended to be prescriptive. The implementation strategies identify a range of possible best practice activities which can help government service providers to incorporate and utilise cultural diversity in their policy and service delivery activities. Similarly, the monitoring and reporting approaches identify possible means that can help providers determine whether their practical strategies are proving to be effective.

The precise nature of implementation strategies, performance indicators and reporting mechanisms will ultimately be a matter for government departments and agencies to determine.

1. Practical strategies for achieving access:

- **Commitment to quality client services:** Agencies recognise the special needs of clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, for example for English or other language assistance through the use of interpreters, in order to make services accessible and appropriate. Understanding customer needs assures quality in service.
 - Agencies need to be aware of possible double disadvantage that may be faced by indigenous or ethnic women, youth, older persons and disabled people when seeking to access government services.
 - Agencies need to recognise the needs of clients in remote areas through developing outreach and

community liaison arrangements. (This is also relevant to the incorporation of equity and communication considerations in service delivery arrangements.)

- **Training:** Public sector training programs in policy development, service delivery, and program management incorporate cultural diversity issues.
- **Prevention of discrimination:** Staff receive ongoing cultural diversity training so that they develop knowledge and skills to work effectively from a cultural framework.

Achievement of equal access to government services could be monitored by:

- Ensuring the regular collection, maintenance, analysis and use of data on potentially disadvantaged groups on the basis of their cultural and linguistic background, and using other data sources as appropriate.
- Where appropriate, reporting on proportional take up rates of clients categorised by their country of birth or cultural or linguistic background compared with their percentage composition of the total population in the service target group or catchment area.

While it is recognised that not everything can be quantified, some measurable indicators of access (such as proportional take up rates) can be useful in helping agencies to determine whether a strategy has succeeded or not – or to what degree it has succeeded.

2. Practical strategies for achieving equity:

- **Recognising and valuing difference:** Clients have different opportunities, education, skills and needs; agencies take account of these differences in the ways services are designed and delivered (for example, by either employing ethnic or indigenous staff to deal with sensitive issues that affect ethnic or indigenous clients; or by developing networks with relevant agencies which could provide support to staff members on specific ethnic or indigenous issues).
- **Removing barriers:** Agencies help clients to overcome possible disadvantage caused by country of birth, language, culture, race and religion (for example, by employing ethnic or Aboriginal liaison officers) so that everyone receives fair treatment from government services.

Achievement of equity by government services could be monitored through:

- Qualitative information obtained via consultations with client groups.
- Use of program outcomes reports and, where appropriate, evaluation case studies to illustrate relative impact on different client groups.

Notwithstanding the difficulty in quantifying certain processes and outcomes, some measurable indicators of equity (such as a reduction in the level of complaints about unfair treatment) will help agencies determine whether a strategy has succeeded, and to what degree it has succeeded.

3. Practical strategies for achieving communication:

- **Informing eligible clients:** Agencies use a range of information strategies to inform clients from different backgrounds about services. Strategies include the provision of information in languages other than English, and through both print and electronic media.
- **Consultation:** Agencies consult with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds at all stages in program planning, design, delivery and evaluation, and provide feedback to customers about the outcomes of these consultations. Agencies also consult with other providers and levels of government, as appropriate, to ensure co-ordination of services appropriate to clients' needs.
- **Participation:** Where appropriate, agencies include people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds on decision-making and advisory bodies so that a broad range of views is brought to bear on all key decisions. In this regard, agencies make use of existing registers of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to make appointments to these bodies.

Achievement of informative, consultative and participatory government services could be monitored through:

- Evidence of the use of information strategies, including the use of television and Aboriginal and ethnic radio and translated materials, so that all clients, whatever their

background, receive appropriate information about services.

- Numbers of clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds involved in consultative arrangements.

4. **Practical strategies** for achieving **responsiveness**:

- **Flexible services**: Agencies optimise the reach and impact of mainstream government programs through adapting their service delivery to the particular needs of different clients.

Achievement of cultural sensitivity and responsiveness of government services could be monitored through:

- Evidence of client needs assessments undertaken and taken into account.
- Evidence of staff undertaking cultural diversity training.
- Measurement of the level of client satisfaction with services through structured feedback.
- Evidence of marketing of services to all sections of the community.

5. **Practical strategies** for achieving **effectiveness**:

- **Collecting data**: Agencies collect data to identify the possible causes of disadvantage associated with a client's cultural and linguistic background which could affect their accessing and benefiting from government services. Key characteristics could include birthplace; whether a person's first language spoken was English, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

background; Australian South Sea Islander background; date of birth, year of arrival in Australia; birthplace of parents; sex; and religion. The collection of data will not always include all these items. The relevance of these data items will vary depending on the service delivery context.

Government service providers need to acknowledge the importance of protecting individuals' privacy when collecting data. Consideration needs to be given to:

- collecting only data essential to the particular service delivery or evaluation purpose;
- guaranteeing anonymity; and
- ensuring that all data collection proposals are non-intrusive.

- **Performance monitoring and reporting**: Agencies develop appropriate performance indicators for assessing if program outcomes have been achieved for clients, consistent with stated objectives.
- **Utilising staff skills**: Agencies recognise, utilise and remunerate the linguistic skills, cultural knowledge and community contacts of their staff, as appropriate.

Achievement of 'results-oriented' government services could be monitored through:

- The extent to which clients of a program achieve agreed objectives within a specified time frame.

-
- Percentage and number of clients satisfied with quality of service; and helpfulness of staff.

By having in place measurable indicators of effectiveness (for example, client satisfaction survey data) agencies will be better able to determine whether a strategy is successful or not.

6. Practical strategies for achieving efficiency:

- **Planning:** The needs of clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are considered in all stages of the program cycle: strategic planning (especially inclusion in vision statements or corporate goals); policy development; program design; service delivery; and evaluation and reporting.
- **Managing resources:** Within available resources, agencies continuously improve the quality of service delivery and seek innovative ways of bringing services to clients; for example, through new technology and partnerships with other agencies. These initiatives take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of clients. Agencies also recognise the needs of clients in remote areas through developing outreach and community liaison arrangements.

Achievement of efficient government services could be monitored through evidence of government agencies allowing for costs associated with developing culturally responsive and accessible services in the course of their budget planning. Where a service is delivered by a non-government contractor these

considerations would need to be factored into agencies' tendering bids and contracts.

Having indicators of efficiency can help agencies to determine whether a strategy has succeeded and the degree to which it has succeeded.

7. Practical strategies for achieving accountability:

- **Public accountability:** Accountability is focussed on outputs and results as well as inputs and processes. Government departments and agencies also need to report on the outcomes they have achieved for clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This can be done through departmental/agency annual reports.
- **Contractual obligations:** Where a program or service is delivered via an intermediary, such as another level of government or a non-government organisation, the funding conditions in contracts specify relevant access and equity accountabilities (for example, collection and reporting of information on client characteristics).

Achievement of accountable and transparent government services should be assured through the reporting mechanisms specified above.

APPENDIX H

COST OF IMMIGRATION, SETTLEMENT AND MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMS

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

The total allocation for the Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Portfolio in 1998–99 is some \$546 million. Of this, \$295 million is allocated to activities such as the movement of people, including tourists, business people and students, into and out of Australia. Refugee and humanitarian programs are also funded from this allocation. It should be noted that the migration program sets its fees and charges to achieve full cost recovery. Corporate management overheads account for a further \$92 million.

The remaining \$159 million is allocated for settlement, Citizenship and multicultural programs, some of which are discussed below.

Settlement programs

The Settlement and Language Services Sub-Program in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs has responsibility for arranging settlement programs for recently-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants which complement the services governments direct to all Australian residents. This includes:

- The Adult Migrant English Program that ensures that migrants have access to English language tuition soon after their arrival in Australia. Expenditure in 1997–98 was \$115.6 million, offset by revenue of \$10.4 million.
- The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) that provides an around-the-clock telephone interpreting

service for the price of a local call and face-to-face on-site interpreting and document translation services during business hours. TIS has evolved beyond being a wholly settlement service to being a service of great value to the wider community. Expenditure in 1997–98 was \$18.5 million, offset by revenue of \$6.5 million.

- The Community Settlement Services Scheme that provides grants to community organisations to assist with settlement priorities identified within the National Integrated Settlement Strategy framework. Expenditure in 1997–98 was around \$23 million.
- Further, under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy, individuals and small groups of refugee and humanitarian entrants are assisted to access general services. Expenditure in 1997–98 was around \$11 million.

Multicultural programs

The Multicultural Affairs Sub-Program in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs has responsibility for core multicultural programs including productive diversity, access and equity, and the *Living in Harmony* initiative. Outcome-based core funding for the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (\$350,000) and the costs of the National Multicultural Advisory Council also come from this Sub-Program. Expenditure in 1997–98 for these core elements was \$4.1 million. Some \$10 million has been allocated for 1998–99, including most of the \$5 million for the *Living in Harmony* initiative that was carried over from 1997–98.

Other portfolios

Predominantly settlement programs

- The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition carries out a number of functions to foster recognition in Australia of qualifications acquired overseas and to strengthen international arrangements for the recognition of qualifications. These include the provision of assessment for individuals and policy advice to government and to employer, professional and community organisations. Expenditure in 1997–98 was around \$3 million.

Predominantly multicultural programs

- The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) is a multicultural and multilingual broadcaster whose television and radio services are broadcast to millions of Australians. Its Charter requires the SBS to provide programming which is culturally and linguistically diverse and reflects multicultural Australia. Expenditure in 1997–98 was \$83 million.
- Various organisations, including the Australia Council and the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, have established multicultural advisory committees.





