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***‘Australian Multiculturalism: the roots of its success’***

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite its racist past, high and diverse immigration and enormous cultural and religious diversity, contemporary Australia is a highly successful and well functioning multicultural society. The paper will analyse the reasons behind this success.

The paper starts with an examination of Australia’s history from early settlement, with special focus on Australia’s social justice ethos and egalitarianism, its initial reliance on mother England for migrants, economy, governance, culture, its self-imposed regional isolation and tight immigration controls.

The focus will then shift to the unique Australian culture that has emerged today, combining the elements of past and present. The paper will explore policies, institutions and laws that facilitated the development of modern Australia and its national character. Specific features of Australian multiculturalism are listed and discussed, including the open nature of Australian society, the significance of immigration controls and the evolution of the ‘fair go’ concept.

Finally, the paper will examine the key and sometimes unique factors that have made the success of Australian multiculturalism possible. Some of these factors may not be present in other societies, thus making advancement of social harmony difficult. Particular attention will be paid to Australian policy and legislative settings, as well as to the Australian education system, all of which focus on inclusion and equity, celebrating the values that bring all Australians together.

**Dr Sev Ozdowski’s Bio Note**

**Dr Sev Ozdowski OAM** is Director, Equity and Diversity at the University of Western Sydney and Adjunct Professor in the Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies at Sydney University. Sev is also President of the Australian Council for Human Rights Education.

Dr Ozdowski worked for the Australian government (1980-96) where he played a major role in the advancement of multicultural and human rights policies and institutions. He also headed the Office of Multicultural and International Affairs in South Australia (1996-2000). As the Human Rights Commissioner (2000-05) he conducted the ground-breaking *National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention ‘A last resort?’* andthe *National Inquiry into Mental Health Services ‘Not for Service’.*

Dr Ozdowski has an LLM and MA in Sociology degrees from Poland and a PhD from the University of New England. As a Harkness Fellow, Sev spent 1984-86 on research at Harvard, Georgetown and the University of California.

Sev's life-long commitment to multiculturalism and human rights was recognised among others by an Order of Australia Medal, Officers Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland and an honorary doctorate from RMIT University in Melbourne.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human rights are the basic norms that make a multicultural society possible. They are the secular standards that guide human interactions advancing dignity, mutual respect and equality.

**The Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camp visited by the participants of the 3rd International Conference on Human Rights Education represents both a total denial of human rights and human diversity and a comprehensive failure of the multicultural ideal. People were murdered there because of their race, religion, politics, ethnic and national origins, sexual orientation, social status and other characteristics that are now typical of modern diversity.**

**The Auschwitz experience has underpinned** the post World War II (WWII) resolve to build an international human rights system.The Auschwitz Museum has also an on-going educational value for all interested in the advancement of civil society.

This paper is about the success or otherwise of Australian multiculturalism.

2. MULTICULTURALISM

**Multiculturalism - does it work?**

Europe’s and Australia’s assessments of success of multiculturalism differ dramatically.

Criticism of multiculturalism appears to be in fashion lately with some European leaders. In fact, in the recent past the heads of the three biggest European economies – Germany, France and the United Kingdom - have all come out against multiculturalism. (Mail Online, 2011)

In October 2010 German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, started the ball rolling by making references to slow the integration of Turkish guest workers and declaring that multiculturalism in Germany had “*failed utterly”*.[[1]](#footnote-1) A few months later, the British Prime Minister David Cameron, using a speech to a security conference in Munich, drew a connection between Islamic extremism and British multiculturalism. The former French President Nicholas Sarkozy, however, delivered the harshest criticism, in February 2011. During a televised debate, he declared multiculturalism to be a failure and asserted that it is socially divisive and undermines the secular nature of French society and called for a renewed focus on France's “*identity*”.

To be fair, I need to acknowledge that these leaders’ assessments do not reflect the reality for all those in Europe who daily practice multiculturalism on the community level. Take, for example, European football, which is a good example of multiculturalism and racial integration in practice.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Australians see the workings of multiculturalism in rather different light from Europeans. To Australians, the European approach to multiculturalism all seems a matter of semantics or perhaps a victory of politics over policy. They view the European leaders’ attacks as being long on rhetoric and short on substance. They see their attacks as focussed more on the name ‘multiculturalism’ as descriptor of demographic change rather than as a policy of empowerment of different ethnic and cultural groupings. Australian critics of the European leaders’ statements would simply suggest that it is difficult to fail at something you never actually tried.

Although Australian multiculturalism has undergone some significant changes since it was adopted as government policy in 1970s, it is generally regarded as a successful undertaking clearly contributing the cohesion of Australian society.

Australian governments, both Labor and the Conservative, have supported it. Recently, for example, Prime Minister Julia Gillard said: *“Multiculturalism is the word that we use to capture our love of the things that bind us together and our respect for the diversity that enriches us”* (Gillard, 2011) and her Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Bowen asserted in a speech entitled ‘The Genius of Australian Multiculturalism’that *“multiculturalism has, without a doubt, strengthened Australian society”.*

Australian Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, confessed that although in the past he worried about multiculturalism, now he embraces it because of his believe *“in the gravitational pull of the Australian way of life”* (Abbott, 2012) His shadow Minister Scott Morrison agrees and does not *“see the experience of Europe on immigration as prophecy for our own future in Australia”*. He links Australia’s success to its selective migration intake. (Morrison, 2011)

So, why do we have such stark differences in judgement of impact of multiculturalism between our countries?

**The meaning of the word ‘multiculturalism’**

Let us start with the question: What is multiculturalism?

There is no agreed definition of ‘multiculturalism’. Looking at how the word ‘multiculturalism’ is used I must conclude that multiculturalism means different things to different people.[[3]](#footnote-3) Below I distinguish three different meanings that are most commonly given to the word ‘multiculturalism’.

First, to some, multiculturalism is simply a demographic descriptor of diverse population. This is the most common use of the word – we often declare that country *x* or *y* is a multicultural society. For example, populations of Germany, France, Peru, India, Malaysia and China are clearly diverse as they include multiple national identities, cultures and religions living next to each other within their borders with their diversity reflected on the streets, at schools, in crime statistics, at football stadiums, etc.

These countries may have also some legal, policy and program responses to such diversity, which may include: anti-discrimination measures, special welfare and language training services for minorities and/or anti-terrorism measures or like in case of China a range of measures directed against non-Han minorities, and in particular against Tibetan and Uyghur people.

The earlier quoted statements by European leaders suggest that European multiculturalism simply fits into this category – recognition of ethno-cultural diversity plus some measures to deal with it. Furthermore, the German, French, British, Dutch and some other European leaders appear to have one thing in common; when they say multicultural they actually mean Islamic culture. There is no talk of need to integrate German immigrants into British culture and vice versa, it is all about the integration of Muslims into Western, secular societies.

Second, multiculturalism can be used as a normative ideal to be aspired to or ideological concept about how a diverse society should be organised to be a just. Multiculturalism is defined as a cohesive society cantered around defined cultural ideal rather than as a collection of ghettoised individual cultural elements. It assumes that culture is enriched by diversity rather than polluted by it and that the diverse cultural elements exist within a cultural envelope that creates its own common ground.[[4]](#footnote-4) Fairness, equality, non-discrimination and justice are viewed as all-important foundation stones of multiculturalism. In fact, nobody would use the word multiculturalism for description of a diverse society organised along the concepts of slavery or apartheid.

According to (Koleth, 2010-11;3-41) in Australia: ‘*Multiculturalism has served a variety of goals over the years, including, the pursuit of social justice, the recognition of identities and appreciation of diversity, the integration of migrants, nation building, and attempts to achieve and maintain social cohesion.’* The Keating government was particularly focussed on linking multiculturalism to the Australian value of *‘fair go’*.

Third, multiculturalism is understood as a social compact that involves power and wealth sharing between different ethno-cultural groups. Such compact is usually based on equality of status and opportunity of different ethno-cultural grouping. It usually consists of a complex set of agreed national values and goals, normative and structural systems as well as policy, budgetary and program responses put in place to manage diversity. Multiculturalism in this sense of the word exists in countries like Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Canada is usually recognised as the birthplace of multiculturalism in the last understanding of the word. Since the nineteenth century, Canada experienced mass immigration and by the 1980s almost 40 percent of the population were of neither British nor French origins. Today Canada has one of the highest per capita immigration rates in the world ensuring that approximately 41% of [Canadians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadians) are first or second-generation immigrants, (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1984-2008) meaning one out of every five Canadians currently living in Canada was not born in the country.

Canada initially adopted a bilingual/bicultural approach to accommodate a large French minority in Quebec, but this did not adequately accommodate other significant minority populations in its western provinces from places like the Ukraine, Poland and Germany as well as its own indigenous population.

A 1963 Royal Commission Report attempted to preserve Canada’s status as bilingual and bicultural society but it was neither popular nor correct. The Report was attacked by both English and French speaking nationalists, but most vociferously by the so-called *‘Third Force’* Canada’s other minority population, who advocated for multiculturalism’. (Marger, 2008) Faced with the very real possibility of their nation being torn apart the formula was changed from ‘bilingualism and biculturalism’ to ‘bilingualism and multiculturalism’. (Knopff & Flanagan, 1989;131)

Let us now focus on the Australian experience with building multiculturalism that is somewhat different from that of Canada or New Zealand.

3. AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM

**Background**

Before offering a commentary on the development and key features of Australian multiculturalism let us briefly examine the Australia’s historical background and her contemporary characteristics as both directly relate to it.

First, Australia is a very young country, especially when one draws comparison with the old world. In fact, the history of modern Australia began on the day Captain James Cook arrived at Botany Bay in the *HMS Endeavour* in 1770 and formally took possession of the east coast of New Holland (as it was then called) for Britain.

To put the timing into the perspective, it was the time when Europe was about to be shaken by the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars and the Polish Great Sejm started its deliberations to deliver the 3rd May Constitution; when the United States of America were consolidating after its War of Independence and Chinese troops occupied Thang Long, the capital of Vietnam.

Politically it was only in 1901 that Australia became a united entity (dominion) with full independence from Britain in international affairs and defence to arrive much later. The process of nation building is not yet finished in Australia.

Second, Australia has always had a culturally diverse population and this diversity has to be managed by the government of the day as the history of white settlement of Australia shows that it was not always peaceful or prejudice free.

Australia began as a white settlement in a land inhibited by Indigenous people. The clash at the frontier between the Indigenous population and white settlers was cruel, hateful and has left long lasting consequences. [Aboriginal resistance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Frontier_Wars) against the settlers was widespread, and prolonged fighting between 1788 and the 1920s led to the deaths of at least 20,000 Indigenous people and between 2,000 and 2,500 Europeans. (Grey, 2008). In the area that was later to become Sydney smallpox decimated the local Eora people and debate rages still as to whether it was deliberately introduced to them or not.

Other conflicts developed along ethnic and religious lines. The settlers imported into Australia the conflict between the Protestant English and Catholic Irish. These old prejudices and hatreds did not subside but flourished in Australia until the early post WWII years when they finally started to wane.

A conflict also developed between white and Chinese miners in the Gold Fields of Victoria and elsewhere during the 1850s. According to John Knott (2001): ‘*There were allegations that the Chinese were immoral, that their methods of mining were wasteful, that they were unwilling to prospect for new fields, that they spread disease, that they would marry white women and that their weight of numbers would eventually swamp British character of the colony’.*

What was particularity resented was that Chinese were very industrious, hardworking and were able to earn income from claims abandoned by white settlers. In other words, Chinese were accused of amongst other things unfair labour competition because they worked too hard. Their work practices were clearly seen by white miners as undermining what they understood to be the *‘fair go’* principles and no equal two way interaction was established between the Chinese and European miners.

World War I (WWI) and WWII saw the government establishing the internment camps in remote locations for thousands of men, women and children classed as 'enemy aliens'. According to the National Archives of Australia (2012) “*During World War I, for security reasons the Australian Government pursued a comprehensive internment policy against enemy aliens living in Australia. Initially only those born in countries at war with Australia were classed as enemy aliens, but later this was expanded to include people of enemy nations who were naturalised British subjects, Australian-born descendants of migrants born in enemy nations and others who were thought to pose a threat to Australia's security”.*

Australia interned almost 7000 people during WWI, of whom about 4500 were enemy aliens and British nationals of German ancestry already resident in Australia. During WWII Japanese, Germans and Italians were also interned based on their ethnicity, even if they were British nationals.

All these past conflicts required extensive government intervention, including legislative, policy and program responses such as the ‘White Australia’ policy and dictation test or establishment of bureaucracies to manage Aboriginal issues or to run internment camps.

Third, since its early days Australia was built as an egalitarian society, with limited class divisions and a culture of ‘fair go’ and social justice. Most Australians had believed that they have a right to act, preferably against the authorities, in case of individual injustice. In fact it is the egalitarian streak in Australia’s national character, and not the past racism and xenophobia, that provided an effective groundwork for establishment of contemporary multiculturalism.

Captain Arthur Phillip given command of the first fleet of convict settlers was remarkably successful at delivering them alive and relatively well to the shores of Australia. Looking back, a large part of Capitan Phillip’s success was his insistence that proper food be provided to the convicts and that they be regularly allowed out of the holds and up on deck. [[5]](#footnote-5)

When Phillip became the first governor of Australia, one of his earliest decisions was to distribute the food equally amongst the convicts and freeman. He realised almost immediately that food was going to be an issue in the new colony and that any system that distributed it unfairly would result in civil unrest. This was not a decision that his men and officers agreed with, particularly when he had anybody who stole from the stores, convict or freeman, flogged.

He also very quickly set up an emancipation system whereby convicts could earn their freedom and take land grants in the new colony. By 1790 there was a growing population of emancipated convicts and ex-military establishing private enterprise.

Considering Phillip’s focus on equal access to food for all, his focus on emancipation of convicts and his little attention to class barriers, it is not without some cause that we can describe Governor Arthur Phillip as the founder of the *‘fair go’* ethos in Australia.

A succession of Governors, some better than others, continued to build a society based on Phillip’s foundations. Governor Lachlan Macquarie, for example, much to the chagrin of the free settlers, appointed emancipated convicts to high government office including Francis Greenway as the colonial architect and Dr William Redfern as the colonial surgeon. He even appointed one former convict, Andrew Thompson as a magistrate. In the old world, this disregard for class barriers would simply not have been possible.

This notion of a *‘fair go’* and equality of all men continued post federation. In 1907, Justice Higgins used Australia’s innovative conciliation and arbitrations industrial relations system to bring down the landmark Harvester decision and established a concept of the living, or basic, wage. As a result employer was obliged to pay his employees a *‘fair and reasonable wage’* that guaranteed them a standard of living that was reasonable for *‘a human being in a civilised community’,* whether or not the employer has the capacity to pay. [[6]](#footnote-6) Another of the industrial court’s early acts was to set the standard working week at 48 hours. What all this meant was that employers had to factor the cost of a decent standard of living into their operating expenses.

The concept of a *‘fair go’* was grounded in this interventionist approach into employment relations and in the resulting flat class structure of Australian society. In particular, the Australian governments had been seen as the custodians of the *‘fair go’* principle and the key function of any government (especially Labor) has been to remove disadvantage, deliver housing, schools and hospitals and tax out of existence tall poppies, as electors will take care of politicians who become too full of themselves. In fact, despite their focus on egalitarianism, Australians display enormous trust in the government and tend to respect and follow the rules.

The extension of *‘fair go’* ethos (both as participation in an equal, two way interaction and as an access to government administered *‘goodies’*) since the colonial days to include new categories of people must be seen as an extension of Australian democracy and economic inclusion; in particular Australian multiculturalism extended liberty, equality and economic wealth to waves of migrants joining the Australian society and offered them a sense of belonging, unparalleled opportunities and integration into democratic institutions.

Fourth, Australia is a migrant country and to put it boldly there would not be contemporary Australia without mass migration. Every person who lives in Australia, with exception of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, is either a migrant or a descendent of a migrant. Having said this, it must be acknowledged that since the very early days Australians have developed a strong national identity, separate from their British nationality and on the ‘Australian way of life’.

Furthermore, Immigration to Australia has always been tightly controlled by the government(s) of the day. (Ozdowski, 1985) Initially Great Britain sent predominantly British and Irish convicts together with accompanying officials and military. As early as 1790, [Governor Arthur Phillip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor_Arthur_Phillip) wrote to England imploring the British authorities to send skilled migrants to assist with economic development.

The first free settlers arrived in 1793, but numerically significant free migration started in 1820s. The British government in 1831 established the first scheme of assisted emigration to New South Wales and Tasmania. (Oxley & Richards, 2001) Then a range of different assisted migration schemes and selection procedures were developed over time by the different colonies to bring in the most desirable migrants, needed for economic development. In 1836 the colony of South Australia was established for free settlers from Great Britain, with notable German language settlement. Skilled tradesmen and wealthy individuals were often the target of the early migration schemes.

Governments temporarily lost control over immigration between 1851 and 1860 after the discovery of gold. During this time, the level of overseas immigration to colonial Australia was unrestricted and reached its peak as the population of Australia had grown from 437,655 to 1,151,947 and the population of Victoria from 77,000 to 540,000. Although the vast majority of newcomers emigrated from the British Isles, there were some Chinese, Americans, Canadians, Germans, French, Scandinavians, Italians and the Poles arriving in this period. The Chinese constituted the largest non-British group numbering about 34,000 people in 1858 and accounting for about 20% of mining population in Victoria. According to Phillip Lynch, the Fraser government Immigration Minister, Chinese *‘did not intend permanent settlement’* and *‘lived on the gold field as closed communities’* (Lynch, 1971;2)*.*

The conflict between the Chinese and White miners resulted in the Victorian government legislating in 1855 to restrict the entry of Chinese into the colony, and then other colonies followed the suite resulting in a significant drop in the Chinese population.

From 1856 the Australian colonies, except Western Australia, became self-governing and took over the management of migration issues, including controls over the levels of immigration, selection of migrants and management of various forms of assistance. This enabled the colonies to adjust immigration intake to changing economic circumstances and labour conditions. Particular attention was paid by the legislators to political pressures to ensure that labour competition between settled colonialist and newcomers was minimalised. (Martin, 2001)

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, several colonies continued funding passage assistance of skilled immigrants mainly from Great Britain but also from Europe and the British government paid for the passage of convicts, paupers, the military and civil servants. From 1880 the Australian colonies adopted the White Australia Policy, the policy of excluding all non-European people from immigrating into Australia that was later unified under national legislation.

The first acts of the Federal Parliament established very strong controls over immigration to Australia. The first act was *The Immigration Restriction Act* 1901, which established the ‘White Australia Policy’ and the famous dictation test to be taken by potential immigrants in any European language, at discretion of immigration officials.

In 1903 the federal Parliament enacted *The Naturalisation Act,* which talks about Australians as British subjects rather than Australian citizenship. It also establishes that Asians and other non-Europeans were to be denied right to apply for naturalisation and that resident non-European males would not be allowed to bring Asian wives into Australia.

Everything changed when WWII came to Australia and when Australia was nearly invaded by the Japanese who flattened Darwin and attacked Sydney. WWII made it obvious that Australia’s population was too small to defend the continent. In 1945, Minister for Immigration, [Arthur Calwell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Calwell) (1945) wrote: ‘*If the experience of the Pacific War has taught us one thing, it surely is that seven million Australians cannot hold three million square miles of this earth’s surface indefinitely.’* The old cry ‘*populate or perish’* won new currency with all major parties and mass migration started. Between 1945 and 2011 some 7.2 million immigrants have arrived and Australia’s population has increased from about seven million in 1945 to almost twenty three million today.

Looking back, even before the end of WWII policy makers recognised that Australia would need a significant number of immigrants in order to both defend her and to grow her economy. They also understood that a post war Britain would be in no position to supply the large number of immigrants required and as a result in 1942 an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on Post-War Migration was formed. By December 1944 part of the minutes of the committee labelled ‘secret’ at the time recommended;

*‘A vigorous policy of white alien immigration, complete with an effort to make the individual alien feel he is regarded an asset;*

*Assistance to immigrants to meet part of passage costs that maybe necessary to induce good flow;*

*A central body of unofficial groups interested in migration to be formed in each State to assist with reception, placement and after-care of migrants, alien and British alike;*

*It should be made clear that Commonwealth immigration policy is based on social, economic and cultural grounds and not on any assumption of racial superiority.’* (Zubrzycki, 1994)

This shows both a need and desire to seek out ‘New Australians’ (as they would become known) from alternative European sources such as Italy and Greece and indeed Poland.

Further it shows that it was government policy to make those New Australians welcome. Arthur Calwell played a visionary role in this policy and process, first as the founding chair of the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on Post-War Migration and then as Australia’s first Immigration Minister.

The post war migration started with a preference for ‘ten pound’ British immigrants; however, when the number of British migrants fell short of what was required Arthur Calwell, opened Australia’s immigration to the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the War from Central Europe and then Southern Europe. The Menzies Government (1949-66) continued the immigration program that the Chifley Labor government had started and signed the Refugee Convention in 1954. (Morrison, 2011) By late 1960s, European migration had slowed and it was no longer sufficient to support Australian appetite for population growth.

Mass migration required changes to immigration and related laws. The division between the British and non-British Australians and the ‘White Australia’ policy were not only out of date with modern Australia and her needs for more migrants, but also offensive to a growing proportion of Australians and to Australia’s neighbours. A change was imminent. As many new arrivals were not British subjects, Australian citizenship was created by the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*. It was also a time to dismantle the ‘White Australia’ policy and introduce a program of global non-discriminatory immigration intake.

But it took some 25 years to completely dismantle the ‘White Australia’ laws and associated practices. (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009) The process was started in 1949 by the Menzies Government allowing some 800 non-European refugees to remain in Australia and allowing Japanese war brides to enter Australia. In May 1958, the [Menzies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Menzies) Government replaced the arbitrarily applied dictation test with an entry permit system, that reflected economic and skills criteria. In 1960 the term ‘White Australia’ was removed from the Liberal Party’s Federal Policy Platform (Morrison, 2011) and the Labor Party followed five years later. The final vestiges were removed in 1973 by the Whitlam Labor government and the migration from non-European countries started after the Fraser government came into office in 1975.

The abolition of White Australia Policy and the resulting globalisation of immigration and refugee [[7]](#footnote-7) intake led to a significant increase in immigration from Asian and other non-European countries. The breakthrough came in August 1977 when, with the European migration being unable to deliver the numbers Australia needed, the Fraser government

started significant intake from South-East Asia.

Now Australia has a non-discriminatory global immigration intake based on skills. For example, of total immigration intake of 127,460 between July 2010 and June 2011, 15.5% migrants came from China and 8.3% migrants arrived from India. In addition, Australia has a generous refugee intake program of some 20,000 people per year.

Fifth, not only immigration policies changed over time, but also outlook of Australian people and Australia’s place in the world has rapidly changed over the last two hundred years. It was a journey from being an insecure, ethno-centric, parochial outpost, glorifying and depending upon Mother England to being a modern, self-conscious, cosmopolitan and independent mid range political and economic power in Asia Pacific. It was a journey from a society based on racial prejudice and intolerance to a contemporary multicultural Australia embracing diversity. During that time the Australian egalitarianism and the principle of ‘fair go’ were extended from applying to British males only to applying to all residents, including women, non-British minorities, people with disabilities and most recently to gay and lesbians.

Examination of Australia’s legal history indicates that the early Australian laws and political institutions that reflected these prejudices and fears.

The Federation movement of the 1890s was firmly driven by our anti-Asian prejudice and fear of foreign invasion. One of the motives for creating a federated Australia was the need for a common immigration policy to stop the immigration of cheap labour mainly from China and of indentured workers from New Caledonia to work in the Queensland sugar industry.

That Australian constitution was created without a US-style Bill of Rights was not an oversight on the part of the drafters, but a conscious reflection of the policies and feelings of the day. Australia being a predominantly white British nation on the periphery of Asia with a fear of being demographically overwhelmed by its heavily populated Asian neighbours did not want to legislate for the equality of people of different races.

The mandate of the League of Nations, established in 1920, was compromised by Australia’s (and other nations) refusal to include a commitment to non-discrimination based on race.

WWII challenged the old alliance with Britain when Australia had to repatriate, despite Churchill’s protest, two Australian divisions were moved from Egypt to Asia Pacific war theatre. A new alliance was formed with the USA when the US military entered the war in the Pacific and then strengthened when USA decided to continue with their significant military and economic presence in the region. The post-war years seen Australia to embrace its independence and grow as a modern nation in its region.

Today’s Australia is clearly a multicultural society in the descriptive use of this word. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Australian Census over a quarter (26% or 5.3 million) of Australia's population was born overseas and a further one fifth (20% or 4.1 million) had at least one overseas-born parent.

Although historically, the majority of migration had come from Europe, the post WWII globalised intake of migrants resulted in modern Australia being one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse societies in the world. When we look at cultural heritage, over 300 ancestries were separately identified in the 2011 Census. The most commonly reported were English (36%) and Australian (35%). A further six of the leading ten ancestries reflected the European heritage in Australia with the two remaining ancestries being Chinese (4%) and Indian (2%). Today Australians speak more than 200 languages – this includes some 40 Aboriginal languages. Apart from English the most commonly used are Chinese (largely Mandarin and Cantonese), Italian, Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese languages. There is also enormous religious diversity with some 61 % reporting affiliation to Christianity in 2011 Census and 7.2% reporting an affiliation to non-Christian religions, and 22% reporting *‘No Religion’*.

To manage this diversity and to respond to the growth in wealth and political influence of non-British settlers, since the early seventies successive governments commenced the development of multicultural policies. These policies moved to extend the coverage of Australian liberties and egalitarianism ethos further to include all with their cultural, linguistic and religious differences within some democratic structures.

In conclusion, contemporary Australia’s consciousness, laws and demographic makeup differ significantly from the Australia of early European settlement and its colonial times and from Australia during the period between the 1901 Federation and the end of the WWII. A very few nations in the world have experienced such a significant change in such a short period of time.

**From Assimilation to Multiculturalism**

Initially, assimilation of non-British migrants and continuation of a mono-cultural ‘Australian way of life’ was the ideal followed. The expectation of the post-WWII Australian immigration policy was that these non-British European migrants would in (short) time melt seamlessly into Australian society and adopt as fast as possible the Australian lifestyle, become local patriots and abandon their past national allegiances and cultural *‘baggage’.*

‘New Australians’ had to speak English, not live in cultural ghettos and wherever possible marry into the Australian-born community. In fact, the first Immigration Minister Calwell was also a vigorous defender of the White Australia policy although it must be said his views reflected the views of the Australian public at the time. It was generally believed that it might take a generation but a conscious policy of assimilation would see a cohesive mono-culture ‘*without self-perpetuating enclaves and undigested minorities.’* (Lynch, 1971).

However upon their arrival non-British migrants did not dissolve easily into the Anglo-Celtic melting pot, but established their own lively communities with churches, sporting, youth and cultural clubs, associations, language schools, welfare and financial institutions. They established these to maintain their culture and to help themselves in the process of settlement. ‘New Australians’ also developed their organisational leaderships and started to participate in political processes. It is important, however to note, that the ethnic communities established their institutions in the broader context of Australian society. Their aim was to participate on equal terms and not to build ethnic ghettos or to separate from the community at large. The good integration of the second generation into broader Australian community is the best indicator of success of such approach.

The changes away from the policy of assimilation towards multiculturalism, political and civic openness and participation were gaining momentum in the late sixties. To start with, the policy of assimilation did not have the moral high ground in a globalising world and both the migrants and many British Australians rejected it as inhumane. The ideals of racial equality were gaining acceptance as geographic and social integration of migrants progressed.

A loose alliance formed between ethnically based and Aboriginal grass-root groups and community organisations and there was a concerted push to legitimise their cultures of both by recognising their value and by ensuring that individuals had the right to continue practising their culture within an Australian context. A culinary revolution and a high rate of intermarriage also played a role in this process.

Further, because of the mass European migration the demographic composition of Australian society had been irrevocably changed and Australia became a multicultural society in the demographic sense of the word. With the increase in numbers and growing wealth of New Australians, political influence of ethnic minorities grew and the so-called ethnic vote started to make difference in particular in the marginal electorates. Finally, there was a clear leadership provided by both Labor and Coalition politicians in support of multiculturalism and against any form of discrimination.

By the early seventies it was also becoming more and more obvious that entrenched cultures carried to Australia by immigrants were not going to go away and that the nation would be better served by accepting diversity rather than trying to eradicate it. This was especially true, when considering the growing political influence and wealth of continental migrants in the Australian society. The ethnic vote was well organised making it difficult, especially in some urban areas, to win a parliamentary election without appealing to minority voters. The threat of the emergence of ‘*self-perpetuating enclaves and undigested minorities’*, was no longer realistic as many migrants were not staying in places of their original settlement but became geographically mobile, using their newly created wealth to settle in the suburbs they aspired to.

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

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

Although Grassby never proposed a precise definition of multiculturalism, his speeches suggested that for him multiculturalism was a range of different ideas, concepts and policies associated with migrant settlement, welfare and socio-cultural policy. (Grassby, 1973) His description of 'the family of the nation' came close to being the first official definition of multiculturalism:

“In a family the overall attachment to the common good need not impose sameness on the outlook or activity of each member, nor need these members deny their individuality and distinctiveness in order to seek a superficial and unnatural conformity. The important thing is that all are committed to the good of all.”*[[8]](#footnote-8)*

The Whitlam government’s practical approach to cultural and religious diversity was to remove the discriminatory provision of the immigration legislation, empower the migrants with anti-discrimination legislation and promote both of these things as good for Australia. *The Racial Discrimination Act* was enacted in 1975 to implement Australia’s obligations under the newly ratified UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and an office of Commissioner for Community Relations was established.

**Ethno-specific services - Multiculturalism under Fraser (1975-1983)**

When Malcolm Fraser’s conservative coalition government came to power in late 1975 it adopted the Labor foundations and significantly extended Australian multiculturalism both as a concept and as a practical policy and program response to diversity. The Fraser’s adoption of Labor multicultural framework established a degree of bipartisan support for multiculturalism that has lasted until now.

Fraser firmly believed that Australia’s culture is greatly enriched by the maintenance of diversity and linked his political success with the advancement of multicultural policies. Under Fraser, multiculturalism also emerged as a concept that articulated a normative ideal of a society based on the principles of social cohesion, equality of opportunity and cultural identity. The Fraser government also believed that it is the government’s responsibility to respond to the settlement needs of migrants, and here I wish to acknowledge the pioneering role of Professor George Zubrzycki and his Australian Population and Immigration Council in defining the normative concept of Australian multiculturalism. A tribute needs also to be paid to the Fraser government for the establishment of a first consultative and advisory body the ‘Australian Ethnic Affairs Council’.

In August 1977, responding to the decreasing European migration and intake of refugees from South-East Asia, the Fraser government established the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants to be undertaken by a Melbourne barrister Frank Galbally.

The Galbally Review provided a watershed in the development of Australia’s multiculturalism. The resulting 1978 Report (Galbally, 1978;5) identified a need to provide ethno-specific services and programs for all migrants to ensure equal opportunity of access to government funded programs and services with a view to helping migrants to be self-reliant.

It has also spelled out in ‘Guiding principles’ (Galbally) what needed to be done to continue developing Australia as ‘*a cohesive, united and multicultural nation’*. The report identified the right of all Australians to maintain their culture without fear of prejudice and identified the need to provide special services and programs to all migrants to ensure equality of access and provision and proposed establishment of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) on the consideration that *'there is very little information available on multicultural developments in Australia and overseas*.’

In 1979 AIMA was established by legislation as an independent statutory authority. The objects of the AIMA included the development of an awareness of cultural diversity, the promotion of tolerance, understanding, justice and equity in the Australian community. These

objects were to be achieved through providing advice to Government, undertaking community education and research, promoting coordination between government and community agencies and encouraging the conservation of cultural materials.

Amongst the many programs set up by the Fraser government the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), a government sponsored radio and television service who’s principle function is *‘to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society’* (SBS charter) has been a standout success.

In 1981, the Fraser government created the first federal Human Rights Commission to implement domestically the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other antidiscrimination measures. Of particular importance was ICCPR Article 27, which states: “*In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their religion, or to use their own language.”* Discrimination on the grounds of nationality was removed from the Federal and State legislation. Subsequently the State and Territory governments developed their own multicultural policy frameworks and programs and removed discriminatory provisions from the State legislation. As a result the new settlers were given more access to social welfare services and Australia’s immigration policies become implemented in non-discriminatory fashion.

**Defining Australian Multiculturalism under Hawke/Keating (1983-1996)**

When the Labor party was returned to government under the leadership of Bob Hawke in 1983 the bipartisanship approach to policy of multiculturalism continued.

The Hawke government started reshaping multiculturalism in response to a range of electoral undertakings. First, he ordered the review of AIMA which was perceived to be too close to Liberals and the former Prime Minister Fraser. The Committee of Review reported to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs November 1983. (AMIA, 1983) The Institute was closed in 1986 and in its place a new Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research was established.

Then, in December 1986 a Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services (ROMAMPAS) was created under the chairmanship of Dr James Jupp to advise on the Federal Government’s role in assisting overseas born residents to achieve their equitable participation in Australian society. The Committee reported in August 1986 expanding a range of principles underlying the concept of multiculturalism, such as principles of equitable access by all to government resources, of rights to political participation, rights to practice own culture, language and religion and recommended the establishment of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. (ROMAMPAS, 1986)   
  
The establishment of OMA, as a central coordinating agency for multicultural policy and programs created a ‘golden era’ in Australian multiculturalism and ensured that the years of Hawke/Keating governments were characterised by the expansion of multicultural narrative and linking it to the mainstream. The focus on service delivery through ethno specific services was replaced by principles of ‘access and equity (A&E)’ applying to delivery through mainstream agencies.

Throughout the Australian Bicentenary in 1988 and afterwards constant efforts were made to link multiculturalism to Australian values and the Australian way of life. According to Gwenda Twan strong efforts were made *to ‘place multiculturalism within a national narrative where cultural diversity and tolerance were part of Australian national identity’*. (Koleth, 2010-11;3-41)

The Federal Government sponsored development by James Jupp of a publication to celebrate the bicentenary called the Encyclopaedia of Australian People, which documents the dramatic history of Australian Settlement and describes the rich ethnic and cultural inheritance of the nation through the contributions of its people. (Jupp, 1988)

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

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

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

The cross-portfolio evaluation of the 1986 Access and Equity Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia , 1992) under the Keating government ensured that the Australian Public Service had to incorporate A&E objectives into corporate planning, data collection, evaluation, audit and staff training and to adopt procedures able to deal with language and culture barriers in service provision. The report also strongly stressed the need for consultation with and participation in policy development by client groups. Part of the outcome was that almost all ‘ethno-specific’ welfare and other services were replaced by mainstream services.

Towards the end of Keating prime ministership there was however a growing disquiet about what it meant for Australia to be a multicultural society or indeed whether being a multicultural society was desirable. The first warning light came in the process of developing the National Agenda when the OMA had commissioned a massive AGB: McNair survey of ‘Issues *in Multicultural Australia’*. The results of the (unpublished) survey indicated that there was a significant disquiet in Australia about government multicultural policies and that a significant proportion held negative attitudes towards multiculturalism. By the late 1980s the number of migrants arriving from Asian and Middle-Eastern countries increased significantly and caused initial settlement problems. In this context the government created ad-hoc 1988 Committee to Advise on Australia’s Immigration Policies, chaired by Dr Stephen FitzGerald, warned of a *‘clear and present need immigration reform’*  and found that the philosophy of multiculturalism was not widely understood and the ‘*ensuing uninformed debate’* was ‘*damaging the cause it seeks to serve*’. (FitzGerald, 1988) Many Australians were particularly and incorrectly concerned that multicultural policies were driving the immigration policies of the day and resented that linkage.

The happy days of bipartisan support for Australia’s immigration policy and on multiculturalism appeared to be over.

**Backlash against Australian - Multiculturalism under John Howard (1996-2007)**

[[9]](#footnote-9)In 1996 the Coalition leader John Howard was swept into power with a significant majority. He has been for many years a vocal critic of multiculturalism. Soon after the election, John Howard had dropped the multicultural portfolio by closing down the Office of Multicultural Affairs and transferring the responsibility for multicultural issues to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. He has also closed the BIMPR, restricted access to the Adult Migrant Education Program to new migrants and reduced funding and consultation of ethnic organisations.

At the same time, a dis-endorsed Liberal candidate and a Queensland fish and chips shop owner named Pauline Hansen was elected and started to voice her strong criticism of multiculturalism, foreign aid and the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Her criticism has won her significant popular support and political following. In her maiden speech to parliament Hansen said “*I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians.”*

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

Then, under the pressure from the National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC, 1999) calling upon the Howard Government to do more to defend multiculturalism, in December 1999 the government launched a new policy statement called *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia.* Multiculturalism, although in slightly redefined form and focus, has returned to public life.

The defeat of One Australia Party and return of public trust in government handling of immigration and multicultural policies allowed since 2000 significant increase in immigrant intake and in overall funding for multicultural, citizenship and settlement programs. A new Council for Multicultural Australia (CMA), supported by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs was created to promote community harmony, through the Living in Harmony grants and promotion of Harmony Day.

The government took also measures to advance the value of Australian citizenship. Now those applying for citizenship need to undertake an Australian history and culture test in English and pledge: 'loyalty to Australia and its people … whose democratic beliefs I share … whose rights and liberties I respect … and whose laws I will uphold and obey.' This policy shift was reflected in the name change from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to Department of Immigration and Citizenship January 2007.

The terrorist attack on Trade Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 also gave Australian Multiculturalism a new lease of life. In 2003 the government issued a new policy statement ‘*Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity: Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic Directions for 2003-2006’.* That shifted the focus of multiculturalism to unity and social cohesion. It also meant the return to old practices of community consultation and of opening government access to the community leaders. To deal with the threat of homegrown Islamist terrorism the government created in 2005 a Muslim Community Reference Group with focus on Australian Muslims to become more integrated with the rest of the community.

**Multiculturalism reasserting itself under Rudd/Gillard governments (2007- )**

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

However, after 2010 election the Australian Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Bowen dropped a bombshell when he announced the restoration of the portfolio and full-on multiculturalism, including anti-racism strategies and other mechanisms that will require taxpayer dollars. In an address entitled *The Genius of Multiculturalism* (Bowen, 2011*)* to the Sydney Institute, given just after the British PM Cameron’s Munich speech, Bowen has quoted Grassby, Keating and even Fraser as examples of how multiculturalism, if done properly can be cure for racial tensions rather than the cause of them. He expressed the view that, “*If Australia is to be free and equal, then it will be multicultural. But, if it is to be multicultural, Australia must remain free and equal.”*

The Australian Multicultural Council was officially launched by the Prime Minister on 22 August 2011 at Parliament House in Canberra and the most current version of Australia’s Multicultural Policy could be found at in ‘The People of Australia – Australia's Multicultural Policy’ (AMAC, 2011).

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has strongly condemned the rioters who took part in a violent protest over an anti-Islamist video as *'extremist’*. *''What we saw in Sydney on the weekend wasn't multiculturalism but extremism,”* she said last night in a speech to the Australian Multicultural Council. (Peake, 2012)

Ms Gillard said last night multiculturalism was not just the ability to maintain diverse backgrounds and cultures but that *“It is the meeting place of rights and responsibilities where the right to maintain one's customs, language and religion is balanced by an equal responsibility to learn English, find work, respect our culture and heritage, and accept women as full equals*. …/ *''Where there is non-negotiable respect for our foundational values of democracy and the rule of law, and any differences we hold are expressed peacefully. /…/ ''Where old hatreds are left behind, and we find shared identity on the common ground of mateship and the Aussie spirit of a fair go”.*

*“True multiculturalism”* had a very different face [to the riots], the Prime Minister continued. It was the face of *''a new migrant studying hard in an English language class, working two jobs to put their kids through school or lining up to vote for the very first time. “True multiculturalism includes, not divides, it adds more than it takes. In the end, multiculturalism amounts to a civic virtue since it provides us with a way to share the public space, a common ground of inclusion and belonging for all who are willing to 'toil with hearts and hands /…/ ''And because it always summons us toward a better future, multiculturalism is an expression of progressive patriotism in which all Australians, old and new, can find meaning.''*

**4. CONCLUSION**

The history of multiculturalism in Australia reflects a journey. It has been the journey from British oriented nationalism and the ‘Australian way of life’, through reluctant acceptance of the need to ‘*populate or perish’* of the immediate post war years through the end of a ‘White Australia Policy’ and to the inclusion of diversity into its liberal democracy and the significant growth of Asian migration. By now Australia has an official multicultural policy and a range of programs to implement it. Although there were some important differences between multicultural policies of Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke/Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard governments, the policy of multiculturalism was built cumulatively by these governments often in the context of political contest for electoral advantage. By now both the political parties and the majority of the Australian public accept the key elements of multicultural policy. The policy, however, is subject of adjustments to reflect the public opinion of the day.

The aim of contemporary multiculturalism in Australia is for all to participate on equal terms, to access opportunities and focus on nation building without need for ethnic ghettos or separateness from the community at large. Over the years, Multiculturalism in Australia maintained 2 key values: tolerance of racial, cultural and religious difference, underpinned by the acceptance of Australian values such as equality of the sexes and the rule of law.

Migrants also participate fully in the Australian economy and to deliver the so-called *‘productive diversity’* dividend(Cope & Kalantzis, 1997)because of their links to the globalised economy.

Under multiculturalism, migrants are expected to join the broader Australian society and its political and cultural institutions at their own pace. This policy aims at integration with *‘human face’* and dignity. It allows for preservation and transfer to the next generation of minority cultural and linguistic heritage that did not conflict with the Australian core values. It is, however, expected that newcomers upon arrival in Australia will give up their foreign loyalties and in particular involvement with the country of origin conflicts and ethnic or religious hatreds.

In other words, contemporary Australian multiculturalism must be seen as a compact or two way street between the Australian society and newcomers that requires both give and take.

As recently the Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, introducing the Australian Multicultural Council Lecture at Parliament House, stated: *“Multiculturalism is not only just the ability to maintain our diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is the meeting place of rights and responsibilities. Where the right to maintain one’s customs, language and religion is balanced by an equal responsibility to learn English, find work, respect our culture and heritage, and accept women as full equals”.*

Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbott agreed saying the “*Newcomers to this country are not expected to surrender their heritage but they are expected to surrender their hatreds.”*

These aims are well reflected in public policy statements and implementation measures. In fact, each government since the 1970s produced its own government manifestos like the Prime Minister Hawke’s *‘National Policy for a Multicultural Australia’*, Prime Minister’s Howard’s *‘New National Policy for a Multicultural Australia’* and practical measures like the establishment of Special Broadcasting Service by the Fraser government.

The public policy is also reflected in a range of many legislative and educational measures, the most prominent being measures to combat race discrimination and prejudice. Starting with Federal *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and appointment of Al Grassby as the first federal Commissioner for Community Relations, Australia developed an effective tolerance infrastructure able to welcome and empower the new comers including those from minority racial, cultural or religious backgrounds. These measures empowered migrant communities and the acceptance of the benefits of diversity and have survived attacks from the right and from the left.

In addition, especially those arriving as refugees, were extended a generous raft of free government benefits, such as healthcare, unemployment and income support payments, English language education, etc.[[10]](#footnote-10)

It is also important to note that each government has also established of a range consultative bodies and liaison mechanism with ethnic community leaders. These play especially important role in handling of social conflicts associated with the nature of diversity. Community leaders are expected to assist the government in particular with management of impact on foreign loyalties and religious hatreds.

In conclusion, multiculturalism, as a public policy, works well in Australia as it supports integration and keeps the society open to the newcomers. What is also important is that it is supported both by the established communities and by recent arrivals (Marcus, 2011; 89-100). For example, recent Mind & Mood (Megalogenis, 2012) report on New Australians, based on extensive interviews with Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese and Somali migrants indicated that they see Australia as peaceful and a fair nation and were more optimistic about their future in the ‘*lucky country’* than the local-born middle class.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The occasional difficulties shown more recently by some radicalised elements of Muslim community in adapting their ways to secular Australia, are in my view temporary and do not reflect the views held by the vast majority of Muslim Australians or their leadership.[[12]](#footnote-12) To link such events with multiculturalism is plainly wrong and as Geoffrey Braham Levy (2012) pointed, the alternative is much worse: “*Abolish Australian Multiculturalism and the strong cultural nationalist impulse in this country would go unchecked. Liberty and equality in ‘Australia would be the first casualties”.*

Finally the question, what relevance has the Australian multiculturalism to the situation in Europe?

First, as the success of Australian multiculturalism has its deep roots in the Australian history and is still a work in progress project, it may be not easily transferable to European conditions.

However, the grounding of Australian multiculturalism in values of equality and liberty makes it relevant internationally. These values are at the core of any democratic society, although some of them may have entrenched structures of privilege and/or racial or religious divisions. Work to extend liberty and equality in any diverse society means advancement of what Australia calls multiculturalism.

Only societies where citizens are free and equal in opportunities can have a common sense of belonging. Only such societies could remain cohesive and engaged in nation building projects.

The human rights education is a key mechanism assisting with the advancement of equality and liberty within the limits of modern liberal democracy. Therefore, we need our educational systems teaching human rights.

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1. Speaking to a group of Christian Democratic Youth and targeting Germany’s guest worker population, Merkel said: “*the beginning of the 60s our country called the foreign workers to come to Germany and now they live in our country.* *We kidded ourselves a while, we said: 'They won't stay, sometime they will be gone', but this isn't reality”* “*And of course, the approach [to build] a multicultural [society] and to live side-by-side and to enjoy each other... has failed, utterly failed”.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example the UK football club Arsenal has only 6 UK players out of its 32-player strong premier league list and their coach is French.  They have players from all over Europe, South America, Africa and Asia. Arsenal, as well as the governing body of football in Europe the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) have teamed up to run anti-racism campaigns to eradicate racism and to educate football fans that there is a zero tolerance policy on racial harassment and abuse.  Examples of successful education campaigns include 'Show Racism the Red Card' events involving high profile professional footballers as anti-racist role models and the Arsenal’s initiative called KROSSS (Kick Racism Out Of School, Sport and Society). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Personally, I must confess that I do not like this word very much. It is because of its ending with *–ism*. Remember the words: fascism, communism, atheism and other words describing ideological commitments and emotions. To me multiculturalism is about working, practical solutions to manage a diverse society and not about ideology or feelings. But I could not come up with a better word to describe what we practice in culturally diverse Australia. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Europe during the period of [Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance) where diverse cultures met and different ideas about architecture, commerce and citizenship flourished could be described as an example of such ideal, although it is rarely associated in our minds with the concept of multiculturalism. It was the time when the multi-national, Jagiellonian Poland experienced its Golden Age. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In a voyage of 252 days Captain Arthur Philip guided 11 ships carrying nearly 1,500 people over 24,000 kilometres without the loss of a single ship and with a death rate of only 3% (45 people). *‘Given the rigours of the voyage, the navigational problems, the poor condition and seafaring inexperience of the convicts, the primitive medical knowledge, the lack of precautions against scurvy, the crammed and foul conditions of the ships, poor planning and inadequate equipment, this was a remarkable achievement*.’ (Wikipedia, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Although this decision lead the world in setting up progressive labour standards and was made long before the Bolshevik Revolution or establishment of the International Labour Organisation, it is important to note, that the Harvester decision did not guarantee the same conditions of employment to women and Aboriginal Australians. In other words, Harvester decision could be also described as both racist and sexist with neither women nor Aboriginal Australians enjoying the benefits of the basic wage. In fact, the early Australian concept of the *‘fair go’* was a bit like Athenian concept of democracy in around 500 BC which formally applied to all Athenian citizens, but excluded Athenian women, most likely Athenians with disabilities, *‘barbarians’* – which often meant other Greeks who spoke in a different dialect or with a different accent and slaves. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The most common non-Christian religions in 2011 were Buddhism (accounting for 2.5% of the population), Islam (2.2%) and Hinduism (1.3%). Of these, Hinduism had experienced the fastest growth since 2001, increasing by 189% to 275,500, followed by Islam (increased by 69% to 476,300) and Buddhism (increased by 48% to 529,000 people). For more see: Jupp, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. However, Mark Lopez (2000) argued that multiculturalism under Labor had a precarious status as ministerial policy because Grassby had not attempted to change the Labor party’s immigration policy, and the policy direction outlined in his speech was not officially confirmed by the Whitlam Government [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. John Howard had been a critic of multiculturalism in opposition and advocated instead the idea of a ‘shared national identity’, grounded in concepts of ‘[mateship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mateship)‘ and a ‘fair go’. Despite initial criticism, when in government Howard left the policy of multiculturalism intact and introduced expanded dual-citizenship rights [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Unfortunately, refugees, and especially those arriving by boats, have a very low rates of labour force participation and extremely high rates of welfare dependence, even many years of residence in Australia. For example, the employment rate of humanitarian migrants from Afghanistan and Iraq are only 9 per cent and 12 per cent respectively five years after settlement with 94 per cent and 93 percent of households in receipt of welfare payments. The reliance on welfare payments by skilled migrants is low, especially because they are not entitled to unemployment and other welfare payments for the first two years of their residence. Also see Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Reported in The Australian, on 15 September 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Although some concerns are being expressed from time to time about radicalisation of some parts of Muslim communities and in particular about brain washing of Muslim youth. For example Professor Clive Williams, a leading anti-terrorism expert has warned that ‘Australian Muslim children are at risk of being groomed in extremist anti-Western ideology by radicalised parents, posing a new challenge to national security agencies’ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)