

Are Australian governance systems and policies in tune with a multicultural society?

Abstract

Australia has adopted various policies to promote multiculturalism since 1972, starting with the initiatives by the Whitlam Government. This paper will endeavour to illustrate that several government systems and cultural practices in Australia do not adequately assist in preserving and further promoting the multicultural society. This is a particularly important issue in that in various parts of the world multiculturalism has acquired a quite negative connotation, e.g. in several European countries. Also the harsh policies of both our major parties in respect of political and religious refugees arriving by boat are not in harmony with the values underpinning our multicultural society.

Governance systems that will be identified as being in need of reform are the electoral systems, the Australian Constitution, representation in our parliaments and executive levels of corporations. Multiculturalism has generally been an outstanding success in Australia presenting a positive model to the world. The recent crisis related to asylum seekers has raised questions about the sincerity of cultural tolerance. Government responses to radical Islam expressions and violence appear extreme and polarise the society. Without quite major reforms in governance systems and representation the conflicts and intolerance demonstrated could stimulate latent prejudices and endanger social cohesion in Australia.

Introduction

The position taken in this essay is that multiculturalism in Australia is a remarkable national strength that deserves to be celebrated, preserved and promoted. It has contributed much to social cohesion, harmony and economic development. However, what is happening in the country in recent years and, equally important internationally, threatens such values. For a country that played such an important role in the formation of the United Nations in 1945, and currently is even a member of the Security Council, the promotion of racial and cultural tolerance, as well as human rights, are essential objectives. The paper will endeavour to illustrate that several government systems, cultural practices and policies in Australia do not sufficiently assist in preserving and further promoting the multicultural society. Representation of ethnic minorities, although slowly improving, has been inadequate for a long time. Highly skilled ethnic immigrants, especially of Asian origin, have difficulty in reaching executive levels in corporations. Achievements of post WWII migrants, although qualitatively often different compared to those of the settled population, are sparsely rewarded in annual honours lists. The policy of Social Inclusion, promoted by the ALP after 2007, was supposed to assist multiculturalism but appeared to replace it. The recently proposed further commercialization of the SBS detracts from the very important role of the Special Public Broadcaster in achieving cultural diversity, broadcasting in no less than 74 languages (Pomeranz & Dempster, April, 2015). Plans to merge the ABC and SBS would seriously reduce SBS's contribution as well. The senseless closure of the ABC's Australia overseas network greatly reduces interaction with and exposure to

Asian and Pacific countries. The recent upheaval over the inclusion of Zaky Mallah in a Q & A audience resulting in a threatening, polarising response by the Parliamentary Secretary Steve Ciobo (1) initially resulted in further attacks on the ABC by the Abbott Government. Attempts by the Abbott government to remove section 18c of the federal Race Discrimination Act are indicative of an underlying desire to accommodate racial prejudice although couched in a desire for extending freedom of expression. In NSW the Migration Museum is still not a reality, if it is to happen at all. In recent years the concerns about political refugees arriving by boats and their treatment in detention camps in Pacific countries has raised serious questions about the multicultural values of Australian society, here and internationally. The Constitution neither reflects the multicultural realities and aspirations nor protects the human rights of citizens and newcomers. The absence of a Statute of Liberty or Bill of Rights at the federal and most state levels is a further handicap. Historical celebrations such as Australia Day, the elaborate ANZAC commemoration and the Magna Carta event are representative primarily of Anglo-Celtic Australian culture and experiences. Nevertheless, Australia has become a microcosm of a growing multicultural world. It is not a melting pot. The earlier policy of assimilation was wisely shelved in 1972 by PM Whitlam. That resulted in a growing appreciation of cultural diversity as well as meaningful social cohesion. What happens here can and should be an important positive example for the rest of the world. Currently, governments seem to have lost sight of that. Asylum seekers are treated like hostile “illegal” invaders, a threat that requires “border protection”, as if Australia is at war.

This is a particularly important issue because in various parts of the world multiculturalism has acquired a quite negative connotation, e.g. in several European countries. Support for political parties of the extreme right have grown considerably. The harsh policies of both our major parties in respect of political and religious asylum seekers arriving by boat are not at all in harmony with the values claimed to underpin our multicultural society.

This paper is divided in three sections:

1. A brief overview of relevant concepts, their origin and explanation: Multiculturalism; Social Inclusion; Social Cohesion.
2. Representation of multicultural diversity in Australia. Examples of lack of adequate representation: parliaments, corporate boards, honours lists. Remedies: a. Major electoral reform; b. Rewriting the Constitution
3. Refugee policies and multiculturalism – a challenge striking at the heart of social cohesion. Is deradicalisation of radical Muslims possible?

1. A brief overview of relevant concepts, their origin and explanation: Multiculturalism; Social Inclusion; Social Cohesion.

Multiculturalism in Australia resulted from the necessity to broaden immigration policies to include non-Anglo immigrants soon after WWII e.g. Greeks, Italians, Dutch and Germans. After the White Australia policy was abandoned altogether several other nationalities were invited as well. The philosophy of

multiculturalism in Australia simply means that approved immigrants from any country can become residents and then Australian citizens and that all ethnic groups are valued for their cultural diversity and contributions to Australian society. The initial Assimilation Policy, based on the expectation that all immigrants would soon fully adapt to the existing way of life, was abandoned by the Whitlam Government in 1972 as both unrealistic and counter-productive. It was replaced by the Multiculturalism Policy and promoted enthusiastically by the then Immigration Minister Al Grassby. After the Whitlam Government lost the election in 1975, the incoming conservative Fraser Government fully maintained this progressive policy. It thus became a bi-partisan policy until the Howard Government came to power in 1996. Howard, a critic of multiculturalism adopted what he called a "One Australia" Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Policy (launched in 1988, following a trip to Margaret Thatcher's Britain). Some multicultural innovations were either scaled down or abolished altogether. Essentially, it aimed at ending multiculturalism and also opposed to a treaty with the Indigenous people. Apparently, the Coalition parties feared a fragmentation of the society and conflict. The multicultural policy was in fact characterized by tolerance and engagement. Altogether Australia's increasingly diverse migrant communities have brought with them interesting food, lifestyle and cultural practices, as well as different languages that enriched the wider society immeasurably. Nevertheless, during the Howard period two proposals to guide and police religious diversity saw the light of day. Furthermore, by 2007 a large number of immigrant nationalities had settled here regardless, including from Africa, the Middle East and several Asian countries. The cultural diversity was further stimulated by a growing number of Asian and Pacific students attending universities. However, political representation remained largely the prerogative of the settled population.

Social Inclusion

The introduction of Social Inclusion as a new major ALP policy initiative after 2007 may have been, in part at least, a response to the conservatives' fears about expected multicultural fragmentation. However, it was also a response to genuine welfare needs of new ethnic groups and, promisingly, it replicated a somewhat similar initiative in Britain (by Prof Charles Leadbeater). The latter emphasized the need for full participation in society by all. Several major conferences were held up to 2012 to assess the meanings of Social Inclusion as well as the connection between Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion. I attended one such conference, in June 2009, organised by the Inner & Eastern Sydney Migrant Interagency (IESMI). The program's title was *Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion - Information and Strategy Forum on Cultural Diversity and Social Justice*.

Key speakers were Senator Ursula Stephens (Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion) and Professor Jock Collins, UTS. Senior administrators in the multicultural field presented interesting papers about Ageing/Disability, Community Services, Education/Training, Health, Housing, and Settlement/Refugees. The principal message seemed to be that Social Inclusion covers far more than the earlier multicultural agenda. Several of around 130 delegates remarked, mostly to their surprise, that multiculturalism, as a key concept seemed to have been overtaken by Social Inclusion. The discussions were certainly lively. The philosophy of "Social Inclusion" was originally approached

by the ALP in a key document in 2007 as a remedy to "Social Exclusion" described as follows:

"Labor believes that to be socially included, all Australians need to be able to play of full role in Australian life, in economic, social, psychological *and political terms*. To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to:

- * secure a job
- * access services
- * connect with others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community
- * deal with personal crisis such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job, and
- * *have their voice heard*" (emphasis added)

However, the later "Principles" document presented by the new Social Inclusion Board, again offered merely a strong social welfare orientation. There was no mention of multiculturalism or cultural diversity here. There was also no concern about the role of the employee in the workplace as an individual who may want to democratically participate in the ownership of and decision-making in the business enterprise. This has long been the practice in many European countries. Strangely, this is still not seen as an important aspect of "Social Inclusion" in Australia even though Minister Julia Gillard clearly advocated that approach:

"The concept of social inclusion in essence means replacing a welfarist approach to helping the underprivileged with one of investing in them and their communities to bring them into the mainstream market economy. It's a modern and fresh approach that views everyone as a potential wealth creator and invests in their human capital.

Including everyone in the economic, wealth-creating life of the nation is today the best way for Labor to meet its twin goals of raising national prosperity and creating a fair and decent society. This is a recognized policy ambition of social democratic parties around the world today. Fairer workplace laws that encourage enterprise bargaining and cooperation will help create a fairer and wealthier society, but on their own they are not enough. We need a new approach to social and economic policy too. And social inclusion is it". Gillard, J. (2008).

Social Cohesion

More recently "Social Cohesion" has emerged as a critical concept connected to multiculturalism. The prominence of the rise of Islam in Australia may be the particular background to this development currently. Many immigrants and refugees from Islam countries arrived, following conflicts in which Australians troops were actively involved, notably in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently adherents of Islam are estimated at 2.2% of the population.

Cohesion can be more specifically defined as "the tendency for a group to be in unity while working towards a goal or to satisfy the emotional needs of its members". This definition includes important aspects of cohesiveness, "including its multidimensionality, dynamic nature, instrumental basis, and emotional dimension". Carron & Brawley (2000)

Obviously, a multicultural society as exists in Australia, is an adequately socially cohesive society where loyalty and pride in one's ethnic and/or religious group

can coincide with both pride and loyalty in Australia as one's country and nationality. The exception that may have occurred here initially, with a small minority of the Islam religion, is that they placed Sharia Law above the essentially secular Constitution of Australia. Where this became a real problem a PM (Gillard) suggested that these individuals could exercise the right to leave the Australia. She argued that Australia is a secular country where freedom of religion exists but not at the expense of the Constitution itself. By all accounts these are exceptions. Most of the Islam clerics and the overwhelming majority of Muslim adherents have no such problems.

Nevertheless, a minority of Australians, even including non-Muslim NESB immigrants, has embraced extreme anti-Islam positions such as supporters of One Nation and Australia First. In my own Dutch Australian community I have found some Dutch immigrants expressing and circulating quite uninformed alarmist views which seem to reflect prejudices emerging from European countries, including the Netherlands. Clearly, these views do NOT advance community cohesion in Australia. I have countered such views referring also to the truly remarkable career of Ms. Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2007, 2008, 2010), an exiled feminist from Somalia who, for some years, was even a prominent MP in the Netherlands. A widely read author she has also lectured in Australia a number of times. In a recent ABC TV interview she reminded viewers that there is no separation between Church and State in the Islam religion as is quite common in Western countries. Islam is a very political religion, perhaps comparable to absolutist Catholicism in Europe until the Protestant rebellion. The Dutch Republic fought the Spanish King for 80 years over this until 1648!

However, quite disturbingly, the most important attack on social cohesion in Australia flows from the attitudes of the current Australian Government in respect of terrorism by ISIS in the "Islam State" and other countries. The so-called "war on terrorism" waged by the Abbott Government against Muslim individuals who are "radicalized" by complex anti-Western movements in the Middle East could, if it persists, damage social cohesion in Australia. The claimed intention is to make Australia a country safe from terrorism. One such measure is under serious consideration, the cancellation of Australian citizenship by holders of dual citizenships. Individuals who participate in cooperating with ISIS (the "Islamic State") would lose their citizenship, on the basis of intelligence provided by Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and a decision by the Immigration Minister. An amendment to the Citizens Act would achieve that purpose.

2. Representation of multicultural diversity in Australia. Examples of lack of adequate representation: parliaments and business corporations. Remedies: a. Major electoral reform; b. Rewriting the Constitution

For this section I draw on a paper presented at a UWS Bankstown Conference a few years ago (2011). I considered to what extent multicultural Australia is represented at higher levels of decision-making in society. That paper concentrated on the paucity of representation of various minority groups in our parliaments and how this can be remedied by changing the electoral system to proportional representation. Such a change would also be beneficial for the entire

political culture in Australia. The second part of that paper concentrated on the serious under-representation of ethnic communities on corporate boards referring to research by NATSEM for the AMP. A BRW issue also drew attention to this and foreshadowed further research. The Anglo-Celtic male dominance on boards is certainly under scrutiny. Action to attempt to engage more women on corporate boards has not been particularly successful; ethnic minorities fared somewhat better. More recent research confirms that both groups remain strongly under-represented on corporate boards, especially from Asian countries.

Political representation – a neglected aspect of social cohesion.

It was believed the 2010 Hung Parliament would yield a "paradigm shift". Did it mean the end of one party ruling and the other opposing no matter what? In most other representative democracies a number of parties seek cooperation to form majority government providing a quite different political culture. But unless concerted action to change the electoral system was taken Australia could soon be back in the full adversarial mode. This is exactly what happened after the 2013 federal election. There are other several other reasons why major electoral system change is urgently needed. Participation in Parliaments by NESB candidates is still poor. Women are under-represented especially in the Liberal Party. Only one Green sits in the House of Representatives, Indigenous people are hardly represented. Although recognised by Australian Governments as deficient, progress towards greater diversity in parliaments has been very slow. This has much to do with the Single-Member District (SMD) electoral system and compulsory preferential voting. Here is a 1989 statement from the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*:

The issue, in 1989: *"The cultural diversity of Australia is not reflected in the key decision-making institutions of society. This is particularly true of our formal political structures. The representation of women, Aboriginal people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds is poor at all levels of the Australian political system. Elected representation at the municipal, State and Federal levels of government does not mirror the ethnic composition of the total population. At the State and Commonwealth levels, for example, only 7% of Parliamentarians are from non-English speaking backgrounds. Aboriginal people and women are similarly under-represented. Remedying this situation depends in part on broader issues affecting social and economic equality, as well as on proportionate participation in political party processes and on the pre-selection policies of the parties themselves". Jupp, J. (1989)*

The issue, in 2006 - 17 years later! In a later, very comprehensive and detailed paper published by the NSW Parliamentary Research Library, the following conclusion reads:

The purpose of this paper has been to highlight some of the complex historical, theoretical and structural aspects hindering the capacity of parliaments to reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community. At present, ethnic and racial minorities remain disproportionately under-represented in legislatures around Australia. The debate surrounding the appropriate level of presence of ethnic and racial minorities in legislative chambers revolves around questions of democracy, equality and recognition. It gives rise

to the threshold question of which groups deserve representation, and how are these groups to be defined? There are no simple answers and matters are complicated further by the fact that many people have multiple group identifications and that groups can come into being and then fade away. Essentially it is a question of the balance that needs to be struck between the representation of minorities, and the maintenance and development of an overarching sense of national identity and purpose, Anthony, K. (2006).

That conclusion is somewhat surprising because the paper shows very convincingly that ethnic, and racial minorities remained politically under-represented in Australia. The most obvious question that requires to be asked, so many years later, is WHY? Yes, it is an issue of democracy, of fairness and equality, but not really one of "balance". There IS a simple answer. The major problem is the Single Member District System. Anglo-Celtic candidates have better chances to be elected and the major parties don't want to change that. The SMD system favours mostly male traditional "Aussie" candidates, not ethnic minority candidates unless they are representing a very strong minority in an electoral district. This does happen in a few instances and the major party then takes advantage of that situation from within its own ranks (major membership less than 0.5% of the population!). Proportional representation (PR) would end the SMD system. However, PR as proposed in this paper does NOT aim at ethnic group representation. PR has multiple advantages. Still, the replacement of the SMD system by multi-member electoral districts would undoubtedly open up greater opportunities for individuals of different ethnic, cultural and religious background, also for women and Indigenous candidates. The pre-selection process would no longer be the virtual monopoly of the major parties.

The Australian adversarial two-party system is altogether increasingly dysfunctional. It often cannot readily achieve parliamentary majorities where they exist and are badly needed. The obvious recent example is the carbon price issue. The refugee policy is another one. Federal-state relations a third. Currently, Australia is governed by the right-wing faction of the Conservative Coalition. That group has a small majority in the Coalition of two conservative parties jointly representing approximately 35% of the total national electorate. The so-called "small l liberals" have to tow a party line that they frequently dislike but politicians crossing the floor is extremely rare.

The 2009 Electoral Reform Inquiry's first Green paper explained *correctly* that **diversity has increased greatly in Australian society since 1945. This is hardly reflected in the Parliament though. But the second Green Paper actually discouraged major system reforms, exactly what is needed.** Apart from the lack of diverse representation there is another very detrimental drawback, often not realised or mentioned. The two-party dominance has thwarted many efforts to update the Constitution. Proposals for constitutional and other referendums, **initiated exclusively by politicians here**, need the full support of both major parties to be passed in terms of Section 128.

Overall 90 countries use a PR system. In Europe, 21 of 28 countries use proportional representation (list systems) including Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Where new constitutions were introduced in the last few decades PR was mostly adopted and **often enshrined** in the constitutions themselves. This was the case in

Portugal (1974), almost all of the countries behind the former Iron curtain in Eastern Europe (after 1991), the new South Africa (1996) and also in New Zealand. 80% of the PR systems are "Party List". **This means that the political parties present a list of candidates and the voters place ONE mark next to the party and a particular candidate (at the same time) to indicate the preference for their party AND the candidate.**

The Greens have the PR policy in their platform but have not campaigned on it much. Obviously it would be greatly in their interest to do so. They are grossly under-represented in lower houses. Changing the Commonwealth Act of 1918 can simply introduce PR at federal level. **No constitutional amendment is required.** The introduction of PR would change the political culture of this country for the better. It is a fairer system, much more democratic, simple for the voters, easier to count, less expensive and it provides diversity, flexibility and new ideas in our parliaments. Above all, it would enhance social cohesion and suit a multicultural society!

The current Premier of NSW confirmed "Liberals need more women and ethnic candidates". Referring to the oversight of business woman Dai Le for pre-selection for the Legislative Council he said that the "Liberal Party must be representative of the whole community" (*SMH*, 22.6.2015).

When checking the NSW MPs by surname in late June 2015 the following percentages show up:

NSW Legislative Assembly:	Anglo-Celtic names: 80%
	Others: 20%
NSW Legislative Council:	Anglo-Celtic names: 74%
	Others: 26%
House of Representatives:	Anglo-Celtic names: 86.7%
	Others: 13.3%
Senate:	Anglo-Celtic names: 80.1%
	Others: 19.9%

Names are sometimes not indicative enough but the federal parliament also provides a list of countries of birth. Of the 226 Members and Senators the record is: 26 overseas born of whom 17 come from English-speaking countries. On that basis only nine of the 226 were born in NESB countries.

Rewriting the Australian Constitution

There are many problems with the archaic Australian Constitution some of which have a direct impact on social cohesion and others more indirect and difficult to recognize for those not familiar with this archaic and basically frozen document that can hardly be amended. Regrettably, most Australians are ignorant about their Constitution; there is often no sense of ownership or pride in it. This is sometimes mistakenly regarded as "conservatism", even as support for the Constitution. When the Constitution was enacted, in a voluntary referendum in 1900, the then six colonies formed an essentially colonial federation. It was an Act of the British Parliament, quite unlike the US Constitution from which the federal principle was copied, and then uneasily combined with Westminster traditions. In the final vote women did not participate and their status and rights are not discussed in the document. Indigenous people did not participate. The

colonial societies were essentially Anglo-Celtic. There was nothing like a multicultural society, as we know it today. The composition of society was essentially representative of United Kingdom settlers with a sprinkling of foreigners on the Victorian goldfields and temporary contract slave labour (Kanakas) in the Queensland cane fields. Racial superiority of the European population was basically unquestioned and deliberately protected by a language test for migrants.

So the first comment one can make is that the present Australian Constitution does not in anyway make mention of the nature of the present multicultural Australian society. There is still endless debate about the recognition of the also unrecognized Indigenous community (with the exception of their voting rights included in 1967) in spite of the positive Eddie Mabo ruling on land rights in 1992. One would think that a new or amended Constitution should at least recognize that this IS a multicultural society, what that means, that it is valued and why and that it is protected in (constitutional) law.

The Australian Constitution also does not contain a Bill of Rights and the society does not have a Statute of Liberties. There are many other problems with the Constitution, which have been detailed, in a recent book published by the Beyond Federation group entitled: *Beyond Federation – Options to renew Australia's 1901 Constitution*, Woldring, K. et al (2014). In Chapter 3 a list of these serious shortcomings is included. Trying to amend and update the 1901 Constitution itself has proved to be virtually impossible. Since WWII the major parties have avoided essential amendments or have ingeniously circumvented the Constitution, or “creative” High Court decisions have provided solutions. George Williams, a well-known UNSW Law Professor, wrote: “The Constitution is out of touch with political reality, the people know very little about their Constitution”. He provided several reasons to **rewrite** the Constitution, a particularly bright idea:

“it was not written as a people’s Constitution but instead as a compact between the Australian colonies to meet the needs of trade and commerce, among other things. So, for instance, it says very little about what it is to be Australian ...how we should behave towards each other as human beings and as Australians. The text of the Constitution does not match political reality because it is premised upon an understanding of the Westminster system of government operating in the United Kingdom”, Williams. G. (in Patmore & Jungwirth, 2002).

Beyond Federation goes further than that but the full list is not included here. Certainly the very costly federal system itself has long ceased to be an appropriate governance structure. However, one of the most bizarre omissions in the Constitution is that the role of PM is not even mentioned but, amazingly, decisions on committing the country to a war are left to this very Prime Minister. There is no requirement for a mandate, parliamentary approval or even discussion, or any participation by the people in the form of a plebiscite or referendum to enter into any war.

This means that Australian participation in the invasion of Iraq, in spite of a massive protest campaign by the Australian people, and the absence of “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq determined by the UN investigator (Hans Blix), could be decided by PM John Howard; a request by US President George Bush prompted this decision. This fundamental error of slavish participation, instead of talking a friendly nation and ally out of engaging in a costly and

ultimately disastrous war, has contributed to, perhaps resulted in tremendous dislocations of Middle Eastern people. Many of our refugees and desperate boat people come from there. Does the Australia Government not have a very special responsibility now to assist these people?

Ethnic representation at the corporate board and senior management levels.

In a 2011 *Business Review Weekly* issue a substantial article appeared under the title the "Bamboo Ceiling". Its introduction reads "*Corporate Australia, especially its senior roles and boards, remains staunchly Anglo-Celtic, despite the changed make-up of our society and a growing number of people from Asia.*" (Fisher & Angelo, September 15 - 20, 2011)

The article dwells on the enormous changes in the make-up of the population since 1947 to the present day, describing Australia as "*an astonishing transformation from monocultural outpost to multicultural beacon*". Concentrating on Asian-born Australians (especially Chinese and Indians) it is forecast that the group will overtake European-born migrants within three years.

"*Why do these groups not have more visible profile in the leadership and governance of companies*", asks Nareen Young, CEO of the Diversity Council Australia. The Council believes that it's time cultural diversity "*was given the same prominence as the push for gender diversity*".

Another article by Nareen Young and Jieh-Yung Lo "*Let's Capitalise on Australia's Cultural Diversity*" in *Pro Bono Australia* takes this deficiency in the corporate sector further:

Australia is arguably one of the world's most culturally diverse countries. Today, Australians come from more than 200 countries, identify with more than 270 ancestries and speak almost 400 languages. Like the recent focus on gender diversity we need measures and strategies to further encourage greater cultural diversity representation in leadership positions (Young & Lo, May 2013).

New research released done by DCA yielded the following summary: *Some of the key findings include: 22.2% of directors are 'culturally diverse' (referring to people from non-Anglo-Celtic cultural origins, i.e. European, Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander origins), 21.9% of CEOs, 19.9% of senior executives and 13.5% of chairs. This compares to 32.2% in the general Australian community; When a narrower definition of 'culturally diverse' is adopted (i.e. excluding people from North West European cultural origins), the degree of culturally diverse business leaders drops by at least half. The proportion of culturally diverse directors falls to 11.3%, culturally diverse CEOs falls to 11.4%, culturally diverse chairs to 7.0% and culturally diverse senior executive positions to 9.7%. This compares to 24.3% in the general community; Most culturally diverse directors have North West European cultural origins (10.9%); The proportion of business leaders with Asian cultural origins is relatively low compared to the general community, especially given the importance of the Asian region to Australia's future economic growth. Only 1.9% of executive managers and 4.15% of directors have Asian cultural origins (versus 9.6% in the general community).*" (Diversity Council Australia, 2015)

This information suggests those many organisations that are targeting Asian countries in terms of their business objectives, should value employees of Asian background and Asian identity more effectively, especially in leadership positions.

The NATSEM / AMP research of November 2010 already indicated that the tertiary skill levels of NESB (I and II) are very advanced and comparable to Australian-born students. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the problem is with inadequate educational qualifications. With the emphasis on “Skilled Migration” for several years now the question must then be raised why are these skills not fully utilized? An extract from that Report:

Are migrants’ skills being fully utilised?

Our discussion earlier shows most migrants are highly educated, however some of them also work in low skilled occupations, and it might be that good qualifications do not translate as readily for some migrants into good jobs as is the case for Australian-born men and women.

Despite higher proportions of young non-MESC migrants having tertiary qualifications in this age group of 25-34 years (46 per cent for men and 47 per cent for women), 40 per cent of them are working only in either low or medium skilled occupation (Figure 13). Therefore, there may be a mismatch happening in terms of what migrants are qualified to do and what kind of job they actually do.

Difficulties in obtaining jobs suitable to qualifications may also be reflected in unemployment rates among the tertiary educated population. Unemployment rates are generally lower for people with tertiary education than for others, reflecting the greater job opportunities available to this group; however, when breaking these figures down by country of birth, we can see some differences. Those born in non-MESC countries have a substantially higher unemployment rate than other groups. NATSEM (2010)

3. Asylum seekers and Refugees

The impact of a growing number of asylum seekers arriving by people smugglers boat in Australia first became a major and decisive issue during the 2001 federal election campaign. The false claim that asylum seekers “had thrown their children overboard” enabled PM Howard to attract a sympathy vote for stronger measures and votes in the federal election. His claim that “we decide who comes here, etc” made no sense for a signatory of the ILO Convention on Refugees and was plainly untrue in relation to political refugees. Repeatedly both Howard and Abbott Governments wrongly referred to asylum seekers as “illegal refugees”, mostly from African, Iraq and Afghanistan origins. This deliberate misrepresentation suited the Coalition parties. Following the Tampa affair a stricter border protection policy was introduced; it was further reinforced as people smugglers provided leaky boats and asylum seekers lost their lives at sea. During the ALP years, from 2007 to 2013, the number of boats increased, as did the asylum seekers who drowned. An Expert Panel of three persons was appointed and the number of approved refugees was increased to 20,000 (27,000 within five years). To reduce the boat traffic Australia could have accepted the 8,000 – 10,000 UNHCR asylum seekers, camped in Indonesia. These could have

been processed much faster there and then transported to Australia but the Expert Panel did not recommend that. Why not? Australia's small intake of refugees per 1000 population, only 1 in 2010, was very low by world standards (ranked 69). With the coming to power of the Abbott Government, their promise "to stop the boats, was pursued fanatically by Immigration Minister Scott Morrison. The ALP had already made agreements with the Governments of Nauru and PNG to resettle refugees there in 2013. The UN Refugee Agency (UNCHR) warned Australia that its decision to send asylum seekers to Papua New Guinea could breach international law and its human rights obligations. Morrison proceeded to present Nauru and Manus Island (PNG) as a deterrent to would-be asylum seekers by declaring that they would "never be settled in Australia" even if they were processed and found to be bonafide political refugees. Furthermore, the Abbott Government declined to discuss their actions with the media, as these were "secret operations" having to do with "border protection" (against unarmed asylum seekers, not hostile invaders). The alarmist and bellicose attitude was completely out of keeping with the values of the UN. The conditions in the detention camps clearly left much to be desired and the idea that there could be some form of employment for the asylum seekers was ridiculous. The Abbott Government then proceeded to also explore the removal of some asylum seekers to Cambodia. Four such persons were persuaded to go there. The official justification for stopping the boats was "that lives had to be saved" but the real reason was to stop asylum seekers and pander to reactionary, racist and anti-Islam sentiments in a section of population. Most recently it was revealed that the Government have paid crew of new people smuggler boats to return asylum seekers to Indonesia. Abbott declared that they would be stopped "by hook and by crook".

"The poor treatment of refugees is giving Australia a reputation as a self-interested, uncaring nation", Tom Allard and Sarah Whyte wrote. This is an account of how after a 22 day, 7000 km journey by boat from Java 65 asylum seekers were returned to where they came from. The people smugglers were paid by a Mr. Agus of the Australian Secret Intelligent Service (ASIS) some US \$30,000 to return them to Indonesia. The pleas of the Bangladeshi, Shri Lankan and Rohingya passengers fell on deaf ears. Each of the 65 asylum seekers had paid \$5,000 for their ill-fated voyage (SMH, 20.6.2015)

The number of refugees in the world is estimated to be 19.5 million (2014). The number of displaced persons is 59.5 million. Australia, a co-founder of the UN, a signatory to the Refugee Convention of 1951 and a current member of the UN Security Council, surely has to play its part in resettling a fair proportion of them. Fairness is said to be a core value of Australian society. For a rich country to take the attitude that we have experienced in recent years the obvious question is: What kind of Government does this multicultural society actually elect? What is wrong with an electoral system that we end up with such an unrepresentative Government? We also should remember that refugees make hardworking, successful immigrants. The evidence of this plain fact is there at least since the 1950s. All these asylum seekers should be resettled and processed in Indonesia and Australia, not in unsuitable developing countries that have major economic and other problems of their own. They should be released from transit camps early instead of wasting time in detention centres. Multiculturalism has been damaged by these policies. SBS – TV made their excellent program *Go back to where you came from!* shown some two years ago. Do not let these asylum seekers/refugees languish any longer, was the message. Understand why they

leave their home countries. The SBS sent their team of six doubting Thomases all over the refugee camps. They came back reformed; most had totally changed their minds. Of course it is not desirable to be swamped by millions of newcomers many of whom do not speak English but this is not what needs to happen. Good management can effectively prevent this. What has been happening here in recent years is not good management at all?

The radicalization of some Muslim youths, desirous to serve the misguided ISIS forces in the Islam State, has provided strong reactions. Especially after the tragic attack and murders in the Lindt café in Martin Place public emotions ran high. Although this atrocity was the work of a psychotic loner, in the context of radicalisation worldwide this instance nevertheless provided a most unwelcome example of madness. The response of the Abbott Government has been to hit back hard and elevate national security to a much higher level. The issue of removing Australian citizenship from those defecting to IS was given high priority. Others tended to ask the obvious question: Why do some Muslims become radicalized and turn their back on Australia? Academics studying such attitudes point to the complexity of the issue. **Is it the result of loss of social cohesion across a broad spectrum of cultural communities in Australia? That seems unlikely.** A large part of the explanation is to be found in a fanatic explanation and claimed promises of the Islam religion suggesting great rewards in a life after death. Can the radicals be brought back to the community's norms by various suggested strategies directed at deradicalisation? Those who stress the need for law and order tend to reject the viability of deradicalisation programs and favour the state's insistence on accountability and punishment. Others like researcher Dr. Anne Aly are convinced that religious radicals can be coached back to a state of normality. "An intervention program successfully used in Europe to deradicalise violent extremists and potential jihadists needs to be adopted in Australia", says the counter-terrorism researcher, chair of group People against Violent Extremism (PaVE). Dr. Aly has put a proposal to the federal government to fund a program that has been successfully used in Germany with neo-Nazis and white supremacists. It is also being established in Britain to help disrupt foreign fighters heading to Syria and Iraq (ABC-TV, Q&A 29.6.2015 program). The state of Denmark is also successfully engaged in treating former jihadists who have repented. Promisingly, PM Tony Abbott has recently visited the Deradicalisation Centre in Singapore. But can he be re-educated? What is more, can the faction that supports him in Parliament be re-educated?

Conclusion.

In a section of Australian society values of multiculturalism are little more than skin deep. But this would not be all that important if the political impact of that relatively small minority was not as significant as it is within the context of Australia's adversarial party and parliamentary systems. It provides sufficient support for the deeply conservative factions of the governing Coalition parties who often pursue policies that are not representative of the multicultural society. These policies also have the effect of damaging Australia's good international reputation on multiculturalism and, contrary to their misguided border protection fanaticism, actually threaten to diminish existing social cohesion. The remedies suggested in this paper are to be sought in major electoral and constitutional reforms. Strategically, a proportional electoral system, yielding a much more diverse and representative harvest of parliamentarians, should be the

first step. It would soon end the expensive, adversarial and dysfunctional party system. Rewriting the Constitution would follow naturally. Replacing the costly federal structure would be part of that basic reconstruction. Although nothing like that is forthcoming from the major parties large sections of the society have reported considerable unease with existing governance systems and expressed majority support for substantial change. Multicultural Australia undoubtedly has the talent to progress opportunities and get the country going.

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