

INQUIRY INTO MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration shall inquire into the economic, social and cultural impacts of migration in Australia and make recommendations to maximise the positive effects of migration. The inquiry shall examine and report on:

This report was prepared by Jahan Kalantar. I am a twenty three year old Australian citizen with an Iranian background who has been raised in Sydney, Australia for the past twenty two years. I possess a degree in international business and finance from the University of Sydney, graduating at the top of my cohort. I am also currently obtaining my Juris Doctor at the University of Technology Sydney.

As a young Iranian Male with ties to both the Australian and Iranian community, I was asked by the Iranian community to prepare this report to give the perspective of a young Iranian male on the matters of consideration to the committee.

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

- The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda;

1. Multiculturalism is the cornerstone upon the foundation of Australia and as a member of the Iranian Community, we often feel marginalised by the perception of a distinctly anti Middle Eastern sentiment. The portrayal of Middle Eastern people in the media and the government response to asylum seekers often creates an image of Iranian's as being a nuisance to the greater community. A key goal of the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda should be to reduce this disparity in perception amongst the general Australian community.

- The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

2. Diaspora Communities have been the cornerstone of Australian culture for many years particularly migration from the Middle East (including countries such as Israel), Asia-Pacific and island nations. As Australia grows in prominence in the international community, the importance and prominence of our migrant community in contributing to the culture and relationship with our trading partners will increase. Whilst it is undeniable that our Asian citizens will contribute greatly to improvements in the relationship between Australia and countries such as China, there

is an imperative connection between Australia and the OPEC countries who supply it with oil. Failure to recognize this relationship will severely impede Australia's ability to participate in regional and global affairs.

SETTLEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society;

3. Participation into the local community, particularly economically is the key to getting full integration. Many migrants feel that Australians hold a grudge against migrants who they perceive as taking all unskilled labour and exploiting public goods such as health and legal services. Investment into community projects such as an 'Iranian' only health or legal service using resources such as Iranian trained doctors and lawyers who could hold some of the load for a reduced rate would assist migrants greatly without causing concerns for local citizens.

- Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

4. When considering long term settlement patterns, it's important for integration to be a major consideration. Providing community based services including training, language skills and combining areas of religious difference (creating areas where churches, mosques and synagogues) are in close proximity might help to achieve and bring greater harmony between races and remind individuals of the multicultural ideas Australia is based upon.

NATIONAL PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

- The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long term productive capacity;

5. Australia depends upon migrant labour to enhance and improve the Australian culture and provide skills that Australians might not have. The

importance of creating an understanding that Australians are comprised of a multicultural pastiche. Therefore, if Universities were willing to provide greater ease of access for migrants to services, it would deeply enhance Australia's long term productive capacity and ability for migrants to provide economic growth.

- The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants;

6. Countries such as Iran suffer from enormous 'brain-drain' as skilled individuals including young professionals leave due to oppressive social and religious governments. As such, Australia could greatly benefit from an influx of intelligent, motivated and trained individuals if it correctly positioned itself. With shortages of many 'blue' collar workers such as plumbers, tradespersons and also a shortage of highly skilled scientists as evidenced by the Australian census; a training program to bridge the gap between existing skills and skills needed to equip migrant workers with the skills necessary to contribute to the economy will greatly assist both the Iranian community and Australia as a whole.

- Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business

7. The formation of a 'migrant' loan scheme from the government in terms of two major areas including education and establishment of businesses would create a huge incentive for migrants to become more involved with the community. Alternatively, a relaxation of some of the barriers to business entry for infant industry from the Iranian community would lead to greater benefits for the business.