

The People of **AUSTRALIA**

Australia's Multicultural Policy

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Foreword

**Prime Minister of Australia,
the Hon Julia Gillard MP**

Australia is a multicultural country. We sing “Australians all” because we are.



Our country’s story is the story of our people in this place. Australia has provided a new home and a chance at a better life for millions of people.

I am a migrant. My family embraced the sense of opportunity and community that they found in Australia and the possibilities for their children that this multicultural country offered them.

I remember the debates in the family home as my parents decided to become citizens of this nation.

And having chosen this country, my family have loved it with a fierce determination and passion ever since.

The Australian Government’s new multicultural policy *The People of Australia* draws on and endorses the valuable work of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council. I thank the Council for their work.

I commend *The People of Australia* to the Australian community.

A handwritten signature of Julia Gillard in black ink.

The Honourable Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister of Australia

Message

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Chris Bowen MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Kate Lundy

We greatly welcome the opportunity to present the Government's new multicultural policy, *The People of Australia*.

This policy recognises the amazing breadth and diversity of Australian society, and reaffirms the Government's unwavering support for a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation.

Australia's multicultural policy complements our national characteristics of equality and a fair go for all. It flows from our deep and abiding commitment to our democratic values.

The policy addresses the importance of the economic and social benefits of diversity, as well as our need to balance the rights and obligations of all who live here.

We know that the face of Australia has been transformed and continues to change in dynamic ways – in how we see ourselves, our neighbours and the world around us.

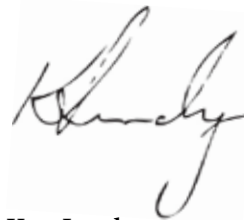
This new policy will ensure we remain responsive to these changes – and the challenges that arise from them in our increasingly globalised world.

The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council is to be commended for their significant work on this policy and we thank them for their time and commitment.

We look forward to the implementation of this policy and its initiatives which will benefit all Australians well into the future.



Chris Bowen
Minister for Immigration
and Citizenship



Kate Lundy
Parliamentary Secretary for
Immigration and Multicultural Affairs







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Australia's Multicultural Policy

Multicultural Australia

The Australian Government is unwavering in its commitment to a multicultural Australia. Australia's multicultural composition is at the heart of our national identity and is intrinsic to our history and character.

Multiculturalism is in Australia's national interest and speaks to fairness and inclusion. It enhances respect and support for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. It is about Australia's shared experience and the composition of neighbourhoods. It acknowledges the benefits and potential that cultural diversity brings.

Australia's multicultural policy embraces our shared values and cultural traditions. It also allows those who choose to call Australia home the right to practise and share in their cultural traditions and languages within the law and free from discrimination.

Australia is a multicultural nation. In all, since 1945, seven million people have migrated to Australia. Today, one in four of Australia's 22 million people were born overseas, 44 per cent were born overseas or have a parent who was and four million speak a language other than English. We speak over 260 languages and identify with more than 270 ancestries. Australia is and will remain a multicultural society.

Supporting Australia's multicultural policy, the Australian Government has a wide ranging engagement with Australia's First Peoples—the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This includes strengthening relationships through the National Apology, supporting the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples, establishing the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and an expert panel to build a national consensus on the recognition of Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

Australia's multicultural policy endorses and draws upon the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council's advice and recommendations to government of April 2010. It is about embracing and benefiting from the strength of our different cultural traditions. It responds to our cultural diversity and aims to strengthen social cohesion.

Australia's multicultural policy acknowledges that government services and programs must be responsive to the needs of our culturally diverse communities. It commits to an access and equity framework to ensure that the onus is on government to provide equitable services to Australians from all backgrounds.

Australia's multicultural character gives us a competitive edge in an increasingly globalised world.

Multiculturalism is about all Australians and for all Australians.





Australia's Multicultural Policy Principles

Principle 1: The Australian Government celebrates and values the benefits of cultural diversity for all Australians, within the broader aims of national unity, community harmony and maintenance of our democratic values.

Diverse cultural expression enriches all Australians and makes our multicultural nation more vibrant and creative. An enduring theme of Australia's multicultural policy is that everyone belongs. We celebrate diversity and recognise that expressions of diversity sit within Australia's national legal framework.

Principle 2: The Australian Government is committed to a just, inclusive and socially cohesive society where everyone can participate in the opportunities that Australia offers and where government services are responsive to the needs of Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Australians from all backgrounds will be given every opportunity to participate in and contribute to Australia and its social, economic and cultural life. Australians from all backgrounds are also entitled to receive equitable access to government services. The Government will strengthen its access and equity policies to ensure that government programs and services are responsive to the needs of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Australia's multicultural policy aligns with the Government's Social Inclusion Agenda where Australians of all backgrounds feel valued and can participate in our society.

Principle 3: The Australian Government welcomes the economic, trade and investment benefits which arise from our successful multicultural nation.

Immigration brings much needed skills and labour. It has also given us energy, ingenuity and enterprise. Immigration and cultural diversity have created economic renewal and prosperity in our communities. Our trade relations have been strengthened, our business horizons broadened and we have become more open to the world. Our diversity of cultures and our multilingual workforce give Australia a distinct competitive advantage in the global economy.

Principle 4: The Australian Government will act to promote understanding and acceptance while responding to expressions of intolerance and discrimination with strength, and where necessary, with the force of the law.

Racism and discrimination affects people's health and wellbeing and denies people fair access to opportunities and services. The Australian Government opposes all forms of racism, discrimination, intolerance and prejudice. The Government has in place anti-discrimination laws and is committed to measures which counter racism and discrimination.

Rights and Responsibilities

Australia's successful multicultural society and our democracy are built around shared rights and responsibilities that are fundamental to living in Australia. These key rights and responsibilities are enshrined in our citizenship pledge which requires future citizens to pledge their loyalty to Australia and its people, uphold our laws and democracy and respect our rights and liberties. These rights and liberties include Australians of all backgrounds being entitled to celebrate, practise and maintain their cultural heritage, traditions and language within the law and free from discrimination.

Australia's Multicultural Future

Australia will continue to have an ever evolving and ever diversifying population. We will continue to be multicultural. This helps create a strong economy, drives prosperity and builds Australia's future. It will also enable Australia to enjoy the cultural and social benefits that cultural diversity brings. Multiculturalism is our shared future and is central to our national interest.



Key Initiatives

Establishment of the Australian Multicultural Council

The Government will establish a new independent body, the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC), to replace the current Australian Multicultural Advisory Council (AMAC).

This responds to AMAC's cultural diversity statement, recommendation two, which calls for a permanent and independent bipartisan body that can advise and consult on policies and emerging issues to inform a national multicultural Australian strategy.

The terms of reference of AMC will be broader than the current AMAC, in that AMC will:

- act as an independent champion of our multicultural nation
- have a formal role in a strengthened access and equity strategy
- have a research advisory role around multicultural policy
- assist with cultural diversity celebrations and Harmony Day activities
- implement a 'multicultural ambassadors' program to articulate the benefits of and help celebrate our multicultural nation.

The AMC will also continue the current AMAC role of advising the Government on multicultural affairs policy. The Government will appoint members to the AMC using a merit-based and independent selection process, such as that used to appoint directors to the boards of ABC and SBS. This will provide for a more independent and non-partisan framework for the appointment of AMC members.

National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy

The Australian Government has no tolerance for racism and discrimination. In response to AMAC's cultural diversity statement recommendation three, the Government will implement a new National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy. This will be a partnership arrangement between: the Department of Immigration and Citizenship; the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Race Discrimination Commissioner; the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council or its successor body, the AMC; and the Attorney-General's Department. The partnership will also consult extensively with non-government organisations in shaping and implementing its strategy. This arrangement will:

- draw together expertise on anti-racism and multicultural matters to form a critical mass
- expand the number and influence of networks in the refugee, migrant and broader community sectors
- enhance the leadership capacities of both government and civic society to be agents of change across Australia
- support a commitment to innovation, effective communication and accountability in the development and implementation of social policy in this key area.

The partnership will design, develop and implement the strategy. It will have five key areas of effort: research and consultation; education resources; public awareness; youth engagement; and ongoing evaluation. It will also take into account and build on existing efforts and resources in these areas.

This strategy would complement the other initiatives announced in Australia's Human Rights Framework around broader human rights programs and the full-time appointment of the Race Discrimination Commissioner. The Race Discrimination Commissioner will also have a leadership role in promoting the strategy.

Strengthening Access and Equity

To ensure that government programs and services are responsive to Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the Australian Government will strengthen the access and equity framework.

AMAC has called for a strengthened and more independent access and equity framework in recommendation five of its cultural diversity statement. In response to this recommendation the Government will:

- Ask the new Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) to manage the access and equity strategy from 2012 to help strengthen the independence of access and equity reporting from government and provide for a more robust reporting framework.
- Conduct an inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services to clients disadvantaged by cultural or linguistic barriers. The outcome of this inquiry would provide the Government with a comprehensive view on how existing services are performing and how they could be improved.
- Work with state and territory governments under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to ensure that data collected by government agencies on client services can be disaggregated by markers of cultural diversity, such as country-of-birth, ancestry, languages spoken at home and level of English proficiency. This will feed into the yearly Report on Government Services (ROGS), which is coordinated by the Productivity Commission.

Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants

The Australian Government will reprioritise the existing scope of the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program to include funding for multicultural arts and festivals small grants. Multicultural arts and festivals provide opportunities for Australians of all backgrounds to come together and experience different cultural experiences. This encourages social cohesion and mutual understanding. \$500 000 over the four financial years will be allocated to these grants to encourage and support community groups to express their cultural heritages and traditions.

Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program

In recognition that sport and active recreation activities are proven strategies to build social and community cohesion, the Australian Government will establish a Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program. The aim of the program would be to create connections and involve youth from new and emerging communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including refugees and minor refugees), through sport and active recreation activities.

The program will be administered by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and will connect youth from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds into neighbourhood sports and community organisations.



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