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Conclusion

An Agenda for the Next Decade

Andrew Jakubowicz and Christina Ho

Forty years on

In the forty years since Al Grassby, Gough Whitlam's Immigration Minister, read a speech to the Cairnmillar Institute in Melbourne that introduced the term 'multiculturalism' into the Australian political lexicon,[1] over four million immigrants have settled in the country. In 1973, the vast majority of newcomers were British-born, and few if any came from Asia: the White Australia Policy had only just been signalled for dismantling. Forty years later, the largest single group of settlers comes from China, while there are over 150 national groups identified in the government's records and over 200 languages spoken. Buddhism is the largest minority religion, followed closely by Islam, with Hinduism growing quickly.

While the demographic transformations are evident, have the political and policy changes been as profound? This book has taken up the challenge of claims to an Australian exceptionalism, to ask the question: is there anything special about Australian multiculturalism? Does multiculturalism work as a broadly accepted, if not always warmly celebrated, philosophy of intercommunal relations? Where are the problems showing up between vision and reality?

In the years before the election of the Rudd-led Labor Government in 2007, many commentators had reached a conclusion that multiculturalism was dying as public policy. Indeed the Australian Labor Party (ALP) did not have a policy on multiculturalism in 2007, and had not had one since before 2000. On the Coalition side, Prime Minister Howard was often lampooned as being unable to say the 'm-' word. A Prime Ministerial hopeful, Peter Costello, had made a major speech in early 2006, in the wake of the Cronulla riots, deprecating 'confused, mushy, misguided multiculturalism', and speaking sternly to Muslims about Australian values, cautioning them to 'shape up' or 'ship out'.[2] During his first tenure as Prime Minister (2007–10), Kevin Rudd made only one

recorded public comment about multiculturalism, and that was to praise the transformation in Australian culinary offerings generated by the diversity of its immigrant population.[3]

Yet in early 2011, while Europe was proclaiming the impossibility and therefore the death of multiculturalism, Australia re-awakened its slumbering beast, if only to feed it on tiny drops of sugar-water. Gradually the standard-bearers stood taller, while state governments became increasingly aware how crucial the immigrants and their children were to be in deciding who would rule in the Parliaments of Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. This chapter draws together the implications of our contributors' reflections, in order to develop a composite narrative.

Was the decision to adopt the discourse and practices of multiculturalism a helpful approach to the settlement of immigrants? What dilemmas were created for the many policy areas which we have discussed by both the advances and retreats that litter the field of multicultural debate? To what extent has political ideology affected policy, or to what extent would the policy settings look somewhat similar because of the problems on the ground that had to be addressed no matter which party was in power? In reviewing policy and practice, what role have the major themes in theory played? To what extent has multiculturalism served as an effective bulwark against persistent and new forms of racism? Based then on our contributors' analyses, we now turn to specific dimensions of the theory–policy–practice nexus.

What have been the main theoretical perspectives and where is the contemporary theoretical debate heading?

As is apparent from this collection, many different disciplines have engaged with the issues of cultural diversity in Australia, including political science, administrative studies, criminology, social geography, sociology, social anthropology, social psychology, political economy, philosophy and cultural studies. Each has brought its own particular perspectives, assumptions and arguments.

In his discussion of the origins of Australian multiculturalism, Mark Lopez[4] characterised four ideological traditions as having influenced the development of the Australian model – namely, cultural pluralism, welfare multiculturalism, ethnic structural pluralism, and ethnic rights multiculturalism. He argued that the 'multiculturalists', a small elite that advocated multiculturalism, took opportunistic advantage of changes in government policies during the Whitlam Government (1972–75) to impose their anti-assimilationist world-views on the public sector. Lopez's account is selective, his take coloured by his own political views (conservative and neo-liberal) and by his focus on the Victorian activists of the period. Nevertheless, the range of approaches that he identified points to the multiplicity of aspects of social life that need to be considered in contemplating how multiculturalisms operate. Even in the constrained Australian milieu, multiculturalism has been affected by different theoretical perspectives occurring often at the same time, and has been fashioned empirically to address many different challenges. The multiculturalism of a Liberal Party under Tony Abbott's social Catholicism[5] carries rather different implications to a multiculturalism argued for by inner-urban Greens with agnostic if not atheistic approaches to religious belief.[6]

Multiculturalism, as a field of scholarly debate, has been affected by the wider currents in the social sciences and humanities; yet the scholarship was always closely linked to a dialogue with policy, and sometimes, too, with professional and community practices. Zubrzycki's and Martin's propositions[7] in the 1970s and 1980s, on cultural pluralism as a critical factor in both retaining immigrants and assuring their commitment to Australia, increasingly foregrounded to government and the scholarly community the dangers of the sedimentation of class and ethnicity into immovable ghettoes of privilege or discrimination. This insight drew on Weber's notion of ethnic groups[8] as being socially constructed status groups in a value hierarchy that could be considered separately from the class relations of the market or the political relations of party politics. They would also present multiculturalism as a philosophy that could offer a new 'conscience collective', a goal that had been sought by Durkheim in the late nineteenth century for metropolitan industrial societies facing the death of God in the face of Darwinian modernity and the fragmentation of traditional community brought about by migration.[9] The Durkheim perspective was carried forward by many other social scientists, especially those who came from Poland[10] – Zubrzycki[11] himself, Jerzy Smolicz,[12] Adam Jamrozik,[13] Jan Pakulski[14] and Sol Encel.[15] They framed their arguments broadly against two antagonists: the assimilationist and diversity-denying 'mainstream',[16] and Marxist critics[17] of the 'idealist' vision (and thereby the 'bourgeois' framing of multiculturalism, as the Marxist would have it) that they promoted.

To some extent, the Durkheim-Weberian versus Marxist intellectual conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s were by-passed as a cultural turn overtook the social sciences, and the history and culture wars deepened in the new millennium.[18] The growth of cultural studies, especially those influenced by post-structuralist critiques, propelled a new debate – essentially focused on the importance of relativistic portrayals of cultural mores. With the fall of the Soviet bloc, and the rise to dominance of economically neo-liberal while socially conservative political leaders, the struggle against the left and postmodernism over values and their cultural expression sharpened within the academy as well as throughout society.[19] 'Multiculturalism' was caught up in this maelstrom, identified by some with an amoral cultural relativism that undermined national values and corroded the moral heartland of Judeo-Christian liberal democracy. John Howard, as Opposition Leader, in 1988 summarised this view when he claimed that 'multiculturalism could never be a national cement for all Australians',[20] exactly the function that Zubrzycki had once argued it could serve. As we have seen, when Howard came to government he intensified the culture wars against those whom he believed were standard-bearers of the multicultural cause. In swift succession, he closed or attenuated all the key agencies of the multicultural agenda, declaring ten years later in his last television debate[21] that his greatest legacy would be the reformed national History curriculum (from which celebrations of cultural diversity and multiculturalism had been hopefully expunged).

Even so, the impact of cultural studies and cultural anthropology has spread, their sensitivity to the 'everyday' and the negotiation of communal interactions[22] complementing the continuing examination of structural imbalances that have affected the lives of immigrants and long-term residents alike. Increasingly, interest in religion and spirituality has grown as national policy agendas foreground religious conflict and the role of religion in social values.[23]

Another important critique has come from feminists. Feminist scholars have contributed to the understanding of the processes of integration, pointing to the tension between communitarian value hierarchies which may have traditionally entrenched sexism and patriarchy, and the demands for equality, opportunity and independence promised by liberal democratic societies (but often not delivered even there). While conservative opponents of multiculturalism have often pointed to cultural mores in ethnic communities that are said to oppress women (the major said to be the enforced wearing of hijab or burqa in Muslim societies),[24] feminist scholarship, especially that concerned with 'intersectionality',[25] has offered a range of more nuanced and insightful analyses. In her chapter, Hurriyet Babacan has demonstrated how a 'gendered' analysis opens out the reader's comprehension of the power dynamics hidden by a cruder and gender-ignoring presentation, and

how it empowers interrogations of the orthodoxy that would not otherwise be available.

What are the main contemporary policy objectives and what do these suggest for the agenda over the next ten years?

The trajectory of multiculturalism as a policy framework in Australia has traversed some challenging spaces, as Christina Ho has demonstrated. Given that multicultural policies have been developed and implemented at national, state and local levels, as Elsa Koleth has noted, the questions with which they have to deal clearly operate in different if complementary spheres. From the outset, multicultural policy can be said to have been designed for one key outcome: the integration of immigrants into the fabric of Australian social life, so that ethnicity, culture and class would not 'line up' and produce the structural rents and cleavages that Andrew Jakubowicz has demonstrated characterise many European societies today. Legitimating cultural pluralism as a policy formula was thought the most likely avenue to prevent such structural division from erupting as a consequence of policy failure.

As the policy evolved, policy-makers became increasingly aware of its potential ramifications. Initially, policy was driven by welfare concerns, where it was feared that at times of social and economic crisis ethnic minorities would experience greater deprivation if caught in hardship, leading potentially to social unrest and injustice. Even so, the concern about ameliorating disadvantage seemed somehow insufficient to policy developers, as it limited policy to a negative orientation – to migrant problems. The Galbally Report recognised that the maintenance of culture, while offering integration and social mobility for individuals, could also produce wider social gains, not only for the migrants and their families but also for the benefit of the whole society.

A sense of the opportunity that might emerge should Australia adopt more cosmopolitan orientations to services and institutions drove key innovations. Among the more important of these, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) could open up the world to Australians (as discussed by Georgie McClean), enhance language learning (as discussed by Joe Lo Bianco), and build a more global sensibility (as proposed by Hass Dellal). Support for heritage and second language acquisition also flourished (though with variations, as Nina Burridge and Andrew Chodkiewicz have argued), as did a sense of cultural rights to communicate and have services that responded culturally to needs, rather than enforcing a straitjacket of cultural assumptions into which all Australians would have to fit. To some extent, these aspirations remain, though policies to implement them have fluctuated in terms of resources and enthusiasm.

Representation remains a major policy issue for government. Usefully, 'representation' carries two distinctive though possibly complementary meanings – a political term referring to participation in decision-making, and a cultural term referring to appearances in various communicated narratives (media, cinema, literature, etc). Governments have addressed the political issue through the creation of boards and committees specifically dealing with diversity (Ethnic Affairs Commissions, Multicultural Councils, etc), while also appointing a range of people of different cultural backgrounds to program boards and councils operating under the aegis of other government ministers. However, the policy varies; sometimes policy never makes it into practice. Thus until the appointment of the retired judge, James Spigelman, to chair the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), there had rarely been anyone of non-Anglo-European background appointed, and no one from a 'non-White' background on the Board. Similarly, the High Court has rarely seen a non-Anglo appointed, while as the chair of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), Pino Migliorino, reports, his organisation fights a continuing struggle to have diversity recognised in the appointment of advisory councils in health, small business and elsewhere. While after 1983 the ALP federal government sought to ensure diverse representation, this line of policy was abandoned under the Coalition after 1996, and has not returned since the ALP retook government.

Time and again, the media have proven to be the most obdurate resisters to multicultural representation,[26] often because of competing values associated with freedom of speech coupled with government fear of being accused of 'social engineering' by the media. Both Greg Dolgopolov and Georgie McClean in their chapters have explored how culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, in their access to communication, have stumbled on a very uneven playing field. Though government policies have supported the growth or maintenance of the 'specialised' focus of SBS, policies supportive of cultural diversity have been only marginally implemented within the ABC, or the commercial free-to-air broadcasters (under the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) codes of practice).[27] In effect, corralled spaces (such as diaspora film festivals) have emerged in which representation of difference and diversity can be pursued, but not in ways which make a serious impact on the more uniform and conformist representation available through the 'mainstream' media.

New immigrants have been drawn to the world of the arts, where they can represent their own experiences and explore their own realities. Andrew Hill has shown how the multiplicity of experiences can be framed by a diversity of artforms, drawing out refugee, gender and class intersections of creativity and resilience.

'Social cohesion' and 'inclusion' have become key buzzwords in Australian social policy. As many of our authors have discussed, the continuing failure of social inclusion adequately to encompass cultural diversity has been one of its most significant drawbacks. Pino Migliorino has argued for the extension of the operation of the concept, as have Violet Roumeliotis and Esta Paschalidis-Chilas in their discussion of community-level programs such as those run through migrant resource centres (MRCs). Local government has increasingly been drawn into this question, partly as the pressures for integration at the neighbourhood level demand attention, while state and federal governments look to the local for positive outcomes, argues Con Pagonis. Dinesh Wadiwel and Brian Cooper have demonstrated how deeply the reluctance or even failure to include cultural diversity penetrates the policy world of disability, significantly corroding the equity dimensions of disability policy. Employment and the workplace have long been identified as the critical space for well-being in Australian social relations; Dimitria Groutsis and Lucy Taksa have demonstrated that implicit hierarchies of gender, ethnicity and class militate against open and equitable outcomes, while Santina Bertone has provided a detailed assessment of the new inequalities emerging in the realm of the temporary immigrant workforce, who are not quite part of society but crucial to the Australian economy.

While the pro-active face of multicultural policy has been in the realm of 'inclusiveness', the deeper policy issues relate to cohesion: in the Australian case, as elsewhere, 'cohesion' has become a proxy term that covers crime, anomie and potentially terrorist violence. As the London 'home-grown' terrorist experiences permeated Australian Government thinking and then expanded through the Cronulla events of December 2005, increasing focus was turned to how that disillusioned and alienated sector of Muslim Australia, that might engage in violence, could be dissuaded, identified and 'interdicted'.[28] Counter-radicalisation became an increasing concern of policing and security under the current rubric of 'community resilience', drawing resources away from other forms of multicultural practice and non-Muslim communities. Pete Lentini has discussed the role of human security priorities as being an essential dimension of contemporary multiculturalism, as important as the social justice issues that occupy

social inclusion debates. The sharpest points of policy are apparent where the claims to equitable social justice and liberal equality come up against the realities of deep-seated racisms. Eugenia Tsoulis has explored the difficult spaces where new arrivals meet the oldest Australians, where Indigenous people offer themselves as guides for those so traumatised by seeking refuge that they do struggle to find a safe orientation in their adopted country. Andrew Hill has realised this interface in his painting for the cover of this book, *Uncle Tom Trevorrow, Accompanied by Major Sumner, Introduces New Arrivals to the Lands of the Ngarrindjeri Nations*. Farida Fozdar has navigated the complex spaces where religious belief, public policy and community expectations collide in often fraught and unresolved ways. Kevin Dunn and Jacqueline Nelson have addressed the reality of Australian racisms and interrogated the responses by government, suggesting that despite the significant advances since the end of the White Australia Policy, far more engagement than is planned would be required to have a serious impact on the intolerance that persists.

What has been learnt from multicultural practice in Australia, across the broad sweep of policy areas?

Our authors have provided a many-layered account of how multiculturalism is done, from policing to community development, from the arts to education. They have uncovered a range and depth of practice that both recognises and responds to the diversity of the nation, and they also point to areas of inadequate and self-serving avoidance of significant issues. National policy captures both of these parameters; we need to understand this bifurcation in order to uncover the challenges that remain unanswered.

In its 2011 policy announcement on multi-culturalism,[29] the Australian Government laid out a multicultural package; it should be read in conjunction with other decisions made in cognate areas, such as the decision not to develop a *Human*

Rights Act. The statement by the Minister, Chris Bowen, contained some words of affirmation – both he and the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, were anxious to say the 'm-' word, unlike Rudd and Howard. The government's new Multicultural Advisory Council, charged with oversight of the policy and its programs, including the review of access and equity, contained members appointed from a pool invited through public advertisement, and two ex officio. Of the fourteen or so names that the external selection panel sent forward to the Minister, a clear pattern appeared in the ten finally appointed. The Settlement Council of Australia network was represented, as was the Multicultural Youth network. A representative of the Jewish community was appointed. Two opinion columnists, for News Ltd and Fairfax, were personally invited to apply by the Minister's office, outside the arm's-length process promised in the advertisement; they were known, on the one hand, as being a critic of radical Islam and, on the other, a proponent of liberal multiculturalism. The remaining five were all Muslim Australians; while each was individually well qualified for their role on the council, together they gave the council a very specific profile. Moreover, no one from the major, earlier immigration cohorts was chosen (e.g., Italy, Greece, the former Yugoslavia), nor anyone from the more recent cohorts (e.g., China, India, Vietnam, Korea), despite names going forward. The make-up of the council seemed to confirm the worry expressed by many in the broader 'multicultural industry', which was that in the mind of the national government, 'multiculturalism' had come to be subsumed by 'Muslim'. This elision had two negative consequences: it turned the spotlight on Muslims as a 'problem', and also alienated many ethnic communities in multicultural debate, from which in a sense they had now been formally excluded.

However the government recognised the need for 'product champions' for multiculturalism, and named forty multicultural ambassadors to represent the policy at a local level. Funds were supplied for a special sports program, because of the belief

that sport made the most effective entry point for young immigrants into friendship relations with longer-established Australians, speed-charging their re-socialisation into Australian mores of sportsmanship. More funds would be provided for festivals and grants to ethnic groups, to celebrate diversity. Meanwhile, more serious funding not identified with multiculturalism ('community resilience') was being channelled through the Attorney General's Department to promote a counter-radicalisation strategy primarily directed at organisations that worked with young Muslims, especially men. At the same time, a debate over second language learning had concluded, with government supporting the 'trading languages of our neighbours' rather than community languages; bizarrely, Arabic was not included.[30]

The innovation that found most support among previous critics of the government's inertia on intolerance was a strategy for anti-racism partnerships, and the appointment of the first full-time Racial Discrimination Commissioner for well over a decade.[31] The strategy, poorly funded though it was, was launched in August 2012, with its major focus falling on alliances with sporting and major community organisations, under the motto 'Racism, it stops with me'.[32] The strategy was very influenced by the work of VicHealth on racism and bystanders,[33] which argued that there was a continuum of tolerance–intolerance in Australia. Public policy, it was felt, needed to reinforce the views of that minority which was tolerant and welcoming of diversity, ignore or bypass the minority which evinced open and severe racism, and concentrate on reaffirming anti-racism as a core Australian value for the majority population, those 'in the middle', who would usually stand by and say nothing when witnessing overt racism.

The broad policy portfolio on multiculturalism that exists in Australia – at the various levels described by our authors – reflects at the national level a certain timidity of purpose, as though a balance has been struck that moves the game forward but does not threaten the apprehensive

middle-ground, one rendered even more timid by an echoing crescendo of anti-Muslim rhetoric, the apparent insecurity of Australia's borders in the face of asylum-seekers, and a self-reassuring narrative of tolerance of moderate diversity. Meanwhile, among the states there have been some important institutional extensions, as with Victoria's multicultural hubs (a more elaborate locally based resource for ethnic organisations, that can facilitate interaction between people of different backgrounds), and the cross-community youth leadership network in New South Wales, which meets regularly with senior officials and explores contentious issues.

Yet when we compare Australia with near neighbour New Zealand, or multicultural initiator Canada, the advances seem less courageous and the outcomes more ambiguous. What might Australia do, then, to move beyond its current constraints?

How special is Australian multiculturalism?

Commentators such as James Jupp[34] note that the high point for Australian multicultural policy was 1989, the year of the *National Agenda* document. The Opposition had been seen off at the 1987 election by the ALP, under Bob Hawke, after which John Howard, the most implacable of multiculturalism's opponents, was replaced by Andrew Peacock, a liberal with more positive attitudes towards the policy even though his party-room voted to abandon it.[35] The *National Agenda* document would form the basis for ALP policy for the 1990 election, where Peacock was defeated again but the 'race card' was not played. There was broad bi-partisanship over the policy, even though it was also clear that the Liberal Party was becoming more radical in its increasing antagonism to Asian immigrants. The *National Agenda* did, however, locate social justice as a new central component of policy, pushing arguments about equity and anti-racism. The document argued for a *Multiculturalism Act*,

and a stronger research presence to underpin policy. While some of this occurred, the return of Howard and the replacement by Keating of Hawke effectively removed both 'the product champion' in Hawke, while re-energising its primary antagonist, Howard. From that point on, apart from the International Cultural Diversity Conference of 1995, hosted by Keating, the momentum of the multicultural agenda began to falter, and to lose purchase on the priorities of government.

The vulnerability of multiculturalism to changing fads or fears of government has been displayed time and again, with decisions taken on the basis of hunch and prejudice, rather than carefully researched options. The effective destruction of the community of scholars that had grown through the 1980s and 1990s around the interface between the academy and government has left Australia unprepared for a series of crises sprung almost without warning. Cronulla, an issue that had been brewing for years, seemed to take government by surprise and produced responses that may well have more deeply entrenched some areas of trans-communal anger. Then months of denial of racism by government intensified the negative fallout from the Melbourne international student Indian-bashings.

The time is well past for haphazard and poorly funded research to be the only base on which serious policy debate can be attempted. For instance, the last major, government-sanctioned study of Australian attitudes to issues of racism was undertaken in 1998, with the results immediately sequestered by the Howard Government to minimise wider public debate about its worrying findings concerning the extent and quality of Australian racism. The research, its findings, and the strategies to which it gave rise under the Living in Harmony rubric, were only released to the public some thirteen years later, under a series of Freedom of Information requests in 2011 and 2012.[36] Such secrecy contributed to the suspicion and cynicism in which the Living in Harmony program was held by some commentators, already

documented in some of the earliest commentaries reported by the Department in the first evaluations of the program in 2000.[37]

While it is unlikely that any government would re-establish the likes of a stand-alone Australian Institute for Multicultural Affairs (AIMA),[38] as existed in the 1980s, or even a Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR),[39] as persisted until 1997, new technologies of communication make it feasible for a 'virtual' research network to be created among many of the universities, government research units, non-government organisations and private consultancies, where research on such issues continues. In almost every area of endeavour, from ageing and health, through neo-natal care, mental illness, educational attainment, small-business formation, and the implications of diversity for national identity, there are few – if any – moments when these issues can be discussed in a sustained fashion, with solid evidence from which conclusions can be drawn. Both AIMA and the BIMPR convened regular conferences of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, so that an open and expanding dialogue could be fostered and various 'kinds of knowledge' drawn into engagement with each other. Such robust interactions contributed significantly to the quality of research and the depth of policy that grew to characterise the decade from 1985 to 1995, encompassing the 1986 AIMA[40] Research Conference and its associated research directory, the *National Agenda* high point and the International Diversity Conference in 1995.[41]

While the larger states all have multicultural commissions or similar entities established under statute, no federal government has yet gone down that path. As early as 1984, the committee that reviewed AIMA recommended a federal commission,[42] but the proposal was rejected; the concept recurred as part of the discussion about institutions for a multicultural Australia in the 1989 *National Agenda*,[43] but was not ultimately put forward as a recommendation, though more recently it became a central plank of the submission

by the New South Wales Community Relations Commission to the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism and Migration.[44] The marginalisation of multiculturalism at the national level proceeded doggedly through the fifteen years after 1996; with no institutional base (advisory councils were creatures of the Department or the Minister, even where they devised arguments to protect the remnants of the multicultural project), there was no bureaucratic product champion to wage the wars against those who would abolish the policy and its programs completely. The small multicultural unit left in Immigration was increasingly focused on the 'Muslim problem' and, despite the personal commitment of its members, faced a difficult task against more senior departments whose ministers were less than positive about the policy. Compare the federal sphere with what was occurring in the major states: the Commissions in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia were able to bring about changes in statute law that embedded multicultural principles, and became a crucial part of the processes through which ethnic communities engaged with Australian democracy, in which new arrivals could develop leaders who would extend their communities' futures in Australia.

The question of a national legislative frame-work for multiculturalism has also appeared and disappeared over the years. The strongest support that this proposal garnered came after the 1989 *National Agenda* debate; in 2012, even before her committee had reported, the Parliamentary Inquiry chair, Maria Vamvakinou MP, was reported as dismissing such a move out of hand, seeing no chance of cross-party support for it,[45] and possibly fearful of being charged with 'political correctness'.

While every society has its unique features, Australia's experience of multiculturalism can hardly be said to be exceptional, if by that is meant that it has to be explained by some essentialist notion of 'Australian genius'. As this book has demonstrated, any liberal democracy with the

economic and social characteristics of Australia would probably arrive at a minimalist multicultural position. The issue is whether Australia has gone much beyond those requirements.

Despite the grand rhetoric of official multi-culturalism, racism persists. Colonial settler societies have to deal with the racism that facilitated and legitimised the initial invasion and settlement of the country, and thereafter the expropriation of the land of the original inhabitants. While racism is now haltingly on the national political agenda, the size of the problem and the pervasiveness of prejudice requires a multi-level, major campaign over a long period of time. Unfortunately, government has chosen to address these issues in a subdued and fundamentally self-effacing manner.

Another area marking the limits of multi-culturalism can be seen in a debate which has not been covered in this volume, namely, over asylum-seekers. Framed in terms of the integration of permanent migrants, Australian multiculturalism has never been fully extended to non-residents, whether refugees seeking asylum, or temporary migrants, such as international students. The Labor Government's reaffirmation of multiculturalism coexists with some of the harshest asylum-seeker policy that this country has seen, with offshore processing and detention of asylum-seekers in remote Pacific locations, and virulently negative political discourse about 'illegals'. Australians' tolerance of cultural difference stops abruptly at our national borders. However, the demonisation of asylum-seekers inevitably poisons domestic inter-cultural relations. How can Iraqi or Sri Lankan Australians living in Australia be genuinely accepted in the national community when their asylum-seeker compatriots are daily represented as threats to the nation's border security?

While Australia's racially neutral immigration policy is usually seen as a symbol of multi-culturalism, the realisation of multicultural values is often undermined by many aspects of the country's same immigration policy and, for

that matter, its foreign policy. To some extent, multiculturalism's defiantly national framing has emerged as a major barrier for the development of a more mature, global or cosmopolitan under-standing of identity and inter-cultural relations.

Agendas for the next decade

A decade on from the writing of this book, Australia will have a population of about twenty-four million; nearly 60 per cent will be first- or second-generation immigrants, while a majority of the overseas-born will be Asian (taking in the sweep from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean). About 50 per cent of the population will profess Christianity, with Islam overtaking Buddhism as the largest non-Christian religion. Non-believers will sit at 35 per cent of the population, outnumbering any specific faith tradition. Maybe 40 percent of the aged population will have a language other than English as their preferred means of communicating, while a similar proportion of children will live in families where English is not the lingua franca. The elderly population will continue to grow, with life expectancy increasing and the full impact of post-World War II immigration from Europe showing up in the nursing homes and hostels of the nation. Nearly half a million people will have been refugees, or are their children and close family. The generation of post-World War II arrivals up to 1960 that joined an Australia also traumatised by war will have been transformed. In its place, we will find a society more starkly divided between those who have benefited from the long boom and the mining miracle, and those who have been more economically marginalised and dependent on the state or on casual and often illicit sources of income. So what should 'multiculturalism' encompass as we move to become increasingly culturally diverse, possibly more cosmopolitan, and ethnically more intermixed?

We want to point to the three elements that make up this book: theory, policy and practice. The interaction between them can only produce

significant benefits for Australia, but how might this best be achieved? In conclusion, we suggest three steps forward, none of which seems to be on the agenda of any Australian Government, despite having being supported over and again by inquiries and advocates for thirty-five years.

An Australian *Multiculturalism Act* (assuming no Bill of Rights or *Human Rights Act*) that guaranteed freedom of belief and culture within an overarching system of legal rights and reciprocal obligations, equality of opportunity, the right to cherish heritage language and culture, and social justice, would be a good initial step. The Act should also create an Australian Multicultural Commission, empowered to monitor and report on government strategies and performance, with a budget sufficient to support innovation that would be more than just small, exemplar projects.

Second, the government, through the proposed Multicultural Commission, should establish an interconnected network of research nodes, producing a regular output of information ranging from empirical and theoretical research, to more accessible and popular accounts of Australian cultural diversity. Importantly, the network would provide a clearing-house for documentation and analysis of best practice in reducing racism, improving opportunity and building communal leadership capacity. It would have a particular role in building resources for education, not only for the intercultural communication capacity parameter, but also for providing 'knowledge about' Australian diversity and its beneficial outcomes for a variety of national curricula. In addition, it would ensure that public policy has a meaningful database of quantitative and qualitative information that can be used to ensure that cultural diversity is embedded in the heart of the process, through which issues are identified, strategies developed and responses implemented.

Third, the Australian arts and media scene needs to respond more effectively to the reality of cultural diversity, supporting creativity that is inclusive and that produces exciting, absorbing

and rich representations of the reality of Australian life. For multicultural integration to be truly effective, diversity needs to become normal, and difference accepted in policy as part of the everyday reality of life, as indeed it already has become in practice.

Notes

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3   Al. Wood (2007), 'Multiculturalism Becomes Poison for Social Capital', *The Australian*; online: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/multiculturalism-becomes-poison-for-social-capital/story-e6frg76o-1111114501368.

4   M. Lopez (2000), *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945–1975*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. See also the views of Lopez's mentor, former officer of the Australian Institute for Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) and member of the Howard Government's National Multicultural Advisory Council, C. Rubinstein (1992), 'What Is Wrong with Multiculturalism?', *The Sydney Papers*, Summer.

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12   J. Smolicz and M. Secombe (1981), *The Australian School Through Children's Eyes: A Polish– Australian View*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

13   A. Jamrozik, C. Boland and R. Urquhart (1995), *Social Change and Cultural Transformation in Australia*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

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