

Research Strategies for Multicultural Australia

***Submission to the Multicultural Framework Review
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***Emeritus Professor Andrew Jakubowicz PhD FRSN FASSA
A.Jakubowicz@uts.edu.au***

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Preface

Why this submission

The Commonwealth released the draft terms of reference for the Multicultural Framework Review in March 2023. Research was not included in the Draft. In June 2023 the full Terms of Reference were released and again did not include Research. There was widespread disappointment that there was no Research reference (Jakubowicz, 2023). Following discussion with the Review chair, it was agreed that I would be engaged to prepare a submission on the Research area, with some commentary on Data.

The importance of corporate memory to the impact of research
 Multicultural policy in Australia has a fifty-year history. An understanding of that history helps policy makers to set contemporary issues in a context, and deduce from previous events the likely consequences of different choices. Corporate memory (or amnesia) (APSREFORM, 2023) is crucial, especially when new policies and ideologies sweep clear the comprehension that had existed and guided earlier steps. In the case of research and research strategies, cultural memory encompasses the issues that the research was designed to explore, how the research was developed and undertaken (methodology), the outcomes of the research, and to what extent the results were fed into policy decisions and with what effects. Cultural memory in the wider community also serves important ends; it gives a sense of continuity to struggles for human rights, illuminates single events as parts of sequences of political, institutional and social interactions, and helps spread shared understandings of challenges and innovations across society. A nation is defined both by what it chooses to remember, and what it accepts to forget. Research is a healthy antidote to amnesia with its dangerous consequences.

Limitations and acknowledgements

This submission has been produced in a very short period. Thanks go to the Department of Home Affairs for materials sourced by them— documents, reports and research. However the time constraints mean that this submission does not canvass the range, extent and impact of the significant research program commissioned by DHA and other departments across its many areas related to multicultural policy – including settlement, combatting violent extremism (CVE), adult education, social cohesion, economic impacts, and refugee and humanitarian support. A full literature review was not possible, neither was an exploration of Commonwealth support for research through the various Australian Research Council

schemes in recent. A more consultative approach with the broad research community had to be constrained to a short online survey with limited reach based on questions I thought important to answer. Some recommendations propose further research – helpful in casting forward possible ways to proceed if the Review accepts this submission, and the Panel report outcomes are adopted by the Government.

The ten recommendations in this submission are based on the evidence to hand and the options canvassed with a range of stakeholders. I am most grateful to those who took time to discuss these issues with me, the sixty respondents to the online survey of researchers, and the Academy of Social Sciences which facilitated some of these contacts.

Why add Research and Data to the Terms of Reference?

The pandemic and the foregrounding of data
With the outbreak of the COVID pandemic in February 2020 it soon became apparent that different populations were being impacted in different ways – vulnerability to infection and illness was closely related to age and locality, while locality also displayed socio-economic (class) and cultural (ethnicity) factors (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2022a) and these overlapped and reinforced both advantages and disadvantaged status. Two major public health interventions early on, foregrounded the ethnic dimension of social disadvantage and the consequential impact on wellbeing and morbidity. In Melbourne the “lock down” in the inner city public housing particularly affected residents of African origin (Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, 2021). In Sydney the lockdown in high-risk neighbourhoods particularly affected “multicultural” communities – especially from the Middle East, Indo-China and the Pacific. These perceived inequities revealed a number of features of public data – most importantly, that data that could have helped researchers identify and thus develop responses to the most vulnerable communities, were lacking (Jakubowicz, 2021). Despite the multicultural nature of Australia and the commitment by governments in 1999 to collect data on cultural and linguistic diversity in the policy areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1999), this had not occurred. Indeed it was rejected by some jurisdictions throughout the first phases of the pandemic in transmission and early vaccination roll-out (Jakubowicz, 2022). One consequence of the realisation by the incoming government of such data failures was the decision to instigate a data framework review, due to commence at the time of writing.

Research has played a critical role in the development of public policy for multicultural Australia. Where systemic research has been implemented, then policies have tended to be robust, effective and nuanced. Where research has been truncated or fragmented, then policies have become far less effective and far more controversial and often harmful. Discussing the COVID pandemic Treasury Assistant Minister Andrew Leigh noted that the earlier lack of data had been superseded in relation to mortality, and that this was crucial to good policy (Leigh, 2022).

In recent years the research community has begun to persuade government of the need for a more capable research infrastructure, including the impact that “big data” can have on illuminating research issues and indicating policy directions. The Decadal Plan for Social Science Research Infrastructure under development by the Academy of the Social Sciences

in Australia, the passing of the Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022, and similar large-scale initiatives indicate that issues relevant to multicultural Australia need to be placed in this policy planning process. We need to be aware of the dual interconnected pathways – research within the multicultural space, and multicultural priorities within the research space.

Research in the development of multicultural policy

Research can encompass many different forms of activity. Western Sydney University, drawing on government definitions, describes research as “the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings” (Western Sydney University, 2023). It involves systematic and creative work undertaken to increase knowledge by collecting, organising and analysing evidence, often thought of as data (“that which has been given”) to be assessed through reason and calculation. Critically, research must advance a new understanding of a situation or behaviours under examination. Research aims to unsettle the taken-for-granted and produce arguments backed by data used as evidence, and with demonstrably rational analysis. One of the most apparent dimensions of multicultural policy has been its role in unsettling the taken-for-granted world of settler colonialism, while reshaping narratives of explanation. The conceptualisation of what contributes to a multicultural society has been part of that research. Independent researchers set their own terms for their research, while much research has been undertaken for government, either by external partners or built into the structures. A great deal of research also occurs within communities, identifying needs, collecting histories, and developing narratives of local lives.

Research supported by government in this context makes three important contributions. Within government, research provides evidence to help shape policy, evaluate implementation and refine rationales. For multicultural communities, research helps develop evidence to advocate for needs and build communal memory, both towards government and within the communities. Within the wider society, research provides evidence to help resolve matters of public interest and concern, and to open up deeper shared insights to underpin wide and rational debate, while building societal memory.

The concept of a multicultural Australia, first elucidated in a paper given by Immigration Minister Al Grassby in 1973 (Grassby, 1973), has a close relationship to social science research. Grassby’s adviser Jim Houston (Houston, 2018) was briefed by among others, Melbourne researcher Des Storer (Storer, 1975), while scholars such as “Mick” Borrie (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019), Jerzy Zubrzycki, Jean Martin (Martin, 1976) and Charles Price provided advice in relation to theorizing cultural diversity, and understanding the realities of the emerging culturally pluralist Australia of the time. A full range of disciplines and approaches was involved – psychology and social psychology, sociology, demography, social anthropology, economics, political science, political philosophy, religious studies, legal studies, history, creative arts and literature studies and more, all contributed to building both the frameworks of understanding and the detailed examination of the processes and outcomes of societal growth and adaptation (National Archives, n.d.).

Interaction between research and practice has been amplified through research conferences and publications, advisory publication groups and partnerships with a variety of

organisations. Over the first “generation” of multicultural Australia (from 1975 to about 1998/9), research structures went through a number of iterations, maintaining a trajectory of depth and growth. These began with research advisory groups to the major policy advisory committees (Zubrzycki, 1977) and then extended with the advent of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs., 1986). The next national government engagement with research infrastructure occurred in the late 1980s, with the establishment in the Department of Immigration of the Bureau of Immigration (later Multicultural and Population) Research (BIMPR) (Bureau of Immigration Multicultural and Population Research, 1995), and the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of Prime Minister (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1997).

The Australian Population, Multicultural and Immigration Program survived the end of the Bureau (1996). This Joint Commonwealth/ State advisory committee supported a number of projects, including an extension of the research for The People of Australia encyclopedia (Jupp, 2001) to the states and territories, surveys of regional migration schemes, and the impact of migration on state economies. However the Commonwealth pulled back and the focus shifted to the state partners. With the creation of the Department of Home Affairs the program was terminated in 2016.

The building and degradation of research structures and the outcomes The decision to develop a research infrastructure carries with it organisational, staffing and resourcing questions, even before contests over the focus of the research have been resolved. Given that Australia has seen many different approaches, comprehension of their trajectories is invaluable in developing such structures in the future.

AIMA was created by the Fraser government acting on the guidelines sketched out in the Galbally report (Galbally, 1978). Its key promoter, PM Malcolm Fraser’s political adviser Petro Georgiou, went on to become its first director. Its most important role was undertaking evaluation of the Galbally report implementation (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1982), though it did create new knowledge aimed to further identify barriers to participation and access to services for migrants of the time. Without bipartisan buy-in, it was politicised from the outset, seen by its supporters as a professional agency concerned with systematic failures to meet the needs of migrants, while also foregrounding innovation that was seen as effective. AIMA also had a membership which provided a framework for building a national constituency in support of its work and the multicultural project. However some critics saw it as conservative and biased towards government programs, rather than as an independent channel for “truths’ about multicultural Australia (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1983). Much of this tension was displayed at the 1984 AIMA research conference, where for the first time critics were able to present their perspectives to researchers from around the country. AIMA was closed down in 1986.

The Hawke government created two institutions with research roles – the Prime Minister’s Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) supported research tied to policy goals, using both commercial and academic research teams. The Bureau of Immigration (Multicultural and Population) Research sponsored research across the broad range of settlement and multicultural fields, some as general information (eg on Australia’s religions), others more specifically focused for topic experts or stakeholders (eg employment). It also organised

research symposia and conferences. With conflict over multicultural perspectives central to the 1996 election, the return of the LNP government under PM Howard was immediately followed by instructions to close down the Office and the Bureau, which followed soon after. Writing during the ascendant years of the Bureau in 1994, the late Graeme Hugo noted ".....recent years have seen a veritable explosion of publication on immigration and settlement issues. Foremost here has been the active publication program of the BIPR itself, which alone now constitutes the most comprehensive collection of immigration and settlement of any nation in the world" (Hugo, 1994). Its closure was a major loss of coordinated energy in research and social knowledge.

There had been a number of research centres before OMA and BIMPR (eg the University of Wollongong Centre for Multicultural Studies established in 1977). Some of these continued to operate during the OMA/BIMPR period, with the Wollongong Centre publishing the end run of the OMA research reports (Dr William Cope worked at the Wollongong Centre before becoming head of OMA and BIMPR, then leaving government after their closures in 1996). After that time the research landscape became more of an entrepreneurial terrain, with two major directions emerging associated with quite divergent perspectives on the most important research questions.

In Melbourne, the Scanlon Foundation (Scanlon Institute, n.d.), resourced by and named for a former business executive and Liberal Party treasurer, entered a partnership with Monash historian of Australian race relations Andrew Markus, to research and publish an annual study of social cohesion. The approach drew heavily on the concepts developed in North America which explored trust and cohesion (Jakubowicz, 2009) as the underlying dynamic of a society able to settle immigrants. Scanlon has published annual reports and has developed a Social Cohesion Index, collaborated with and resourced by various governments, and plays a central role in debates about experiences of and attitudes to multicultural Australia.

In Sydney concerns about the racism that seemed to be accelerating in the post 2001 period drew social geographer Kevin Dunn and his colleagues to establish the Challenging Racism Project (Challenging Racism Project, n.d.), now based at Western Sydney University. Most of its resources have been drawn from a continuing series of projects funded by the Australian Research Council aided by bodies such as the Human Rights Commission, with a significant scholarly output. The focus of the team has been on the extent, nature, and experiences of racism and strategies for resistance and programs for reduction.

Another major concentration of researchers, the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, under director and UNESCO Chair in Cultural Diversity and Social Justice, Fethi Mansouri, carries both an Australian and wider global perspective. It has a particular interest in Middle East studies, and a wider multi-disciplinary purview on institutional forms of racism. It receives both University support and has secured many ARC grants, while also collaborating with all levels of government. Its Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS) (CRIS: The Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies, n.d.), with Michelle Grossman as director, based on a consortium of local and international universities, civil society organisations and think-tanks, undertakes collaborative research focussed on social impact goals and practices, with ongoing support from the Victorian government.

Aftermaths: national Research considerations

The termination in about 2000 of any national research strategy in relation to immigration and multicultural issues, seriously fragmented the capacities that had been evolving, while disrupting opportunity for future evidence-based policy debates. The contribution that a cohesive national research agenda confers is aptly demonstrated in the Appendix, which contains a selective list of BIMPR and OMA publications.

Many of the researchers and civil society leaders interviewed for this submission pointed to the desolate research landscape that emerged after 2000 and in particular, the corrosive and limiting effects of the lack of any coordinated national research agenda, research conferences and ongoing interaction between policy and research. This situation has worsened despite the emergence of innovative research clusters. For instance a meeting “Beyond Racism: Policy frameworks for a diverse Australia” held at Curtin University in Perth during September 2023, which brought together policy-makers, not-for-profits, communities and academics, stressed the continuing pressing need for new multicultural research agendas.

Over the past decade Parliament has addressed this issue repeatedly, without progress.

2013 Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Multiculturalism

The 2013 Joint Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia represents the last major public government-level consideration of the multicultural research field (Parliament of Australia Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2013). The Committee report, Chapter 7 of which was on research, noted the decline in research capacity, quoting Graeme Hugo’s submission that:

I would like to stress ... the need for an independent research capacity which does research itself but also encourages, coordinates, and leads research which is directly policy relevant and translates that research not just for policymakers but to inform the public discourse.

Summarising its understanding the Committee stated it:

recognises the importance of informed policy, and an independent research body that is responsive to a wide range of issues relating to settlement, integration and participation of all communities. The research needs to be integrated into policy development processes and there must be a feedback loop from the research, through practice, monitoring and evaluation.

The Committee found there were three major issues – a) lack of consistent and useful data; b) poor accessibility to data for both academic and community researchers; and c) no national research agendas to help shape research outcomes.

It recommended that the Australian Government collect accurate and up-to-date disaggregated data in order to identify trends in migration and multiculturalism, and to measure and address CALD related disadvantage. It also recommended the establishment of a government funded, independent collaborative institute for excellence in research into multicultural affairs with functions similar to that of the former Bureau of immigration, Multicultural and Population research. Its statutory framework should articulate key principles of multiculturalism, its functions including research and advice to government, and a cross-sectoral independent board. This institute should actively engage with local communities, private business and non-government organisations and provide data for better informed policy.

The qualitative and quantitative research capabilities of the institute must enable up-to-date and easily accessible data and research analysis on social and multicultural trends.

More dedicated research into long-term migration trends occurring within Australia and the social effects of migration—such as the local impacts of migration on cultural diversity and social inclusion within Australian society—should be supported.

The Committee particularly recommended an increased emphasis on qualitative data collection, and the collection of mobility data allowing service planning and delivery to follow movements of communities from localities of first settlement.

None of these recommendations were endorsed by the incoming government.

2017 Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism

Although there had been no response from the Government to the 2013 recommendations, the Senate established a Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism in 2016, which reported in 2017 (Senate of Australia, 17 August 2017).

However after this second report was completed, in December 2017 the Government finally responded to the 2013 Report. In relation to the recommendation on research, the Government supported it in principle but rejected the call for the establishment of an independent institute as “not necessary”, claiming the ABS data was sufficient for researchers, and that existing collaborative research was meeting the need for data sharing and access and equity outcomes.

In its discussion of the adequacy of research and data, the 2017 Committee noted that there “was a general consensus that neither data nor research is currently sufficient to promote multiculturalism in Australia, to plan for and deliver services to CALD communities, and to formulate multicultural policy” (p.83). Moreover, it noted “it is time Australia had a national multicultural research agenda to better promote diversity and cultural coexistence”(p.84). A number of submissions argued for a national research institute.

The Committee concluded that there was a need for a comprehensive range of data, including on racially motivated crime. It expressed a concern that “that Australia does not have a national multiculturalism research agenda”. It recommended (r 13) that “the Australian Government consider establishing an independent and resourced body, such as a

National Centre for multiculturalism and religious diversity, to provide strategic and coordinated research into the areas of multiculturalism and religious diversity“ (p.88).

There was no government response to this Committee, though there was a key outcome – the Parliamentary Greens moved legislation in the Senate based on the Committee recommendations, which sits there still (Di Natale, 2018). The Greens’ proposed Multicultural Commission would have a research function.

2021 Senate Inquiry on Nationhood, national identity and democracy report
The 2021 Senate report on Nationhood (Senate of Australia, 2021) reviewed the wider debate over the relationship between democracy, nationhood, national identity and cultural pluralism. It noted that “High quality data and research is the foundation for promoting social cohesion. The committee commends the work of the Scanlon Foundation and others.” (p.118). It then recommended that: “the Australian government establishes and resources a national research centre on migration, citizenship and social cohesion, to monitor: flows of migration and migrant settlement; issues of diversity and cohesion; affiliation and identity; civic participation and engagement; evaluation of service provision and access; and gaps in existing research” (p.119).

2022 Senate Inquiry on Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia
The 2022 Senate Inquiry into Diasporas in Australia (Senate of Australia, February 2021), which produced the infamous challenge to Chinese Australian witnesses as to their loyalty to Australia (Hurst, 16 October 2020), also addressed research. In evidence to the Committee, emphasis was placed on community capacity to collaborate in or undertake research to identify issues and build evidence to support claims for government support.

For instance the African Think Tank argued that many multicultural community organisations “lack the capacity to strategically evaluate the value of their work, which can hamper their growth and sustainability. To remedy this, ATT recommended that community organisations’ research and evaluation skills be developed” (p.29).

In summary, over the past decade considerations by Parliament of various dimensions of multiculturalism and cultural diversity have returned to the need for a strong, resourced and independent research capacity. However governments throughout the decade have rejected this advice, in part claiming that the Australian Bureau of Statistics was a sufficient source for government and the society more broadly. While the ABS has a critical role to play (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2022b), it neither pretends to be such a resource nor has the brief to supply the wide range of required research alone, though it can and does contribute in partnership with other research groups. None of the government responses have addressed the importance of a national multicultural research agenda. While not a recommendation, the MFR could consider suggesting the government does provide a response to the three Senate Inquiry reports relevant to multicultural research structures and agendas.

Key Issues in Research and Data

The relationship between well-structured and supported research, and good policy development, implementation, and evaluation
There has been an increasing focus on research and data in analyses of public policy in Australia (Jakubowicz, 2015). In the early years of multicultural policy, research was already seen as a major dimension of policy development.

The Galbally Report (Galbally, 1978) proposed a Commonwealth-State working party to advise on arrangements for collecting and analysing information (data) for planning and evaluating services (p.7). Most importantly it proposed an Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, “because of the lack of information on multicultural developments in Australia and overseas”, which would “engage in and commission research and advise government bodies on multicultural issues” (p.11). Galbally argued that “if we are to achieve the real benefits of a multicultural society, its development must be guided, supported and given direction by independent experts of high calibre” (p.109).

The Institute was to be directed by a small council of experts in multicultural development and migrant issues. Its functions would include the commissioning of research, the dissemination of information, the development of materials for training of professionals in fields such as medicine, social work, education and the media, the provision of advice to government, and the education of the community. While most of its research work was involved with program evaluation and community needs (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1982), it sponsored a research conference in 1984, and produced a research directory in 1986 (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs., 1986).

Even though the Institute was abolished in 1986 during Budget cuts which impacted multicultural programs, the Labor government soon recognised the critical role in policy of the range of research it had been established to promote. The government after 1986 partly separated the dual functions of research and policy, and created the Bureau of Immigration (and later Multicultural and Population) Research (Bureau of Immigration Multicultural and Population Research, 1995), and the Office of Multicultural Affairs with its own research program (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1997). The research output of these agencies is summarised in the Appendix. The Office’s research was extremely important in the development of the 1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (Australia Commonwealth Government, 1989) (Borowski, 2000).

Thereafter the various policy statements by government were essentially unsupported by independent research. However in 1998 the Coalition government commissioned a major survey of community attitudes to cultural diversity, using the private firm Eureka Research (Eureka Research, 1998). While designed to inform policy engagement with the growth in racism unleashed around the rise of the politician Pauline Hanson the research demonstrated significant levels of prejudice in the community, and was refused release by the government as a secret Cabinet paper (Jakubowicz, 2011). The policy outcome of the research was the creation of a Community Harmony agenda, one element of which was the naming of the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as Harmony Day.

Another example of how research and policy can test each other was a research project funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship during the Labor government in

2012, and published under the Coalition in 2014. “Voices shaping the perspectives of young Muslims” was contracted to provide insights for government policy. The research concluded that government needed to listen to the voices of young Muslims. A series of recommendations, which had been requested, were provided. All of these, especially those directed at other government departments, were rejected *en masse*. The comment was made that the young Muslims needed to listen to government, not the other way around. The report was only released for publication with the proviso that it would not contain any recommendations. This interchange between government and scholar-researchers points to the problem of intellectual property ownership, and also whether and through what means the public has the right to access research it has paid for.

A different indication of the tension that can arise between research and policy can be found in the 2020 decision of the Coalition government and the Department of Home Affairs to terminate the Multicultural Australia and Immigration Studies (MAIS) data base provided online through *Informit* (<https://search.informit.org/ourcollections/indexes/mais>). The Department Library provided *Informit* with monthly updates, though the collection contained material dating back to the 1800s. In the background paper for the MFR, the Department noted:

[MAIS] also offers an almost unique source of publications from inception of the Department of Immigration in 1945, the former Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research and the former Office of Multicultural Affairs have been indexed, as well as those by relevant government, non-government and research organisations throughout Australia. MAIS is used extensively by researchers of migration and multicultural topics in Commonwealth Departments, the Parliamentary Library, universities and other educational institutions and in this way promotes collaborative relationships between the Department, academia and the broader research community. From January to December 2020 there were 297,417 searches conducted across the MAIS.

A footnote states “Access to Informit is currently paused for staff of the Department of Home Affairs due to budgetary restrictions”.

The Value proposition for MAIS, also prepared by the Department for the MFR, states:

When regularly updated MAIS creates many benefits, including:

- *Researchers, policy officers and decision makers are able to source up-to-date information on citizenship, immigration and multicultural issues from a curated database, saving research time.*
- *An up to date MAIS provides confidence accessing a quality source of information, curated by professional apolitical government librarians.*
- *The MAIS database informs a wide public dialogue on immigration and multicultural affairs which has a positive effect for the department’s reputation within the broader research community.*

Here we have evidence that a conscious decision was made, framed through a budgetary rationale, to prevent public servants accessing research that may help them develop more evidence-based policy advice, while having a negative effect on the DHA reputation, and ensuring a decay in the quality of the MAIS content.

How to identify key issues in multicultural Australia and their reflection in research agendas

Research agendas are best formed through collaborative consultation between stakeholders. The deliberative democratic process initiated in the AIMA national research conference in 1984 continued through the 1980s and 1990s. Regular national research conferences were held where researchers, communities, government policy areas and other stakeholders were able to interact, present their insights, engage with their communities of interest and knowledge circles, and refine future research directions.

Researchers Survey 2023

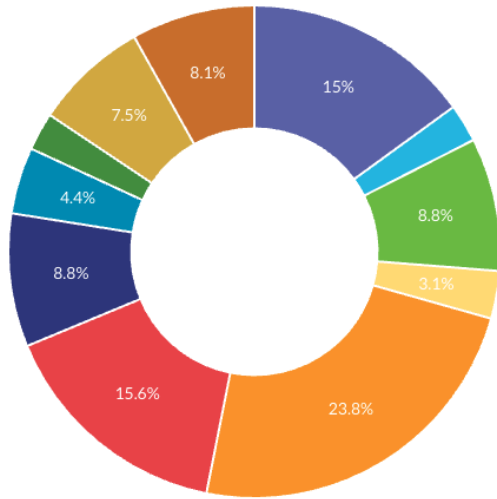
As part of preparing for this submission, a survey was sent to over one hundred researchers in government, academia, commercial organisations and civil society. There were sixty responses. Disciplines included anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, social work, health sciences, political science, global studies, social economics, history, law, education, public communication, journalism, cultural studies, gerontology, disability studies, social geography, computer studies, and Islamic studies.

Despite the range of issues and disciplines involved, ninety percent of respondents agreed that “multicultural perspectives are very important in understanding key issues in my field of research in Australia”. About two thirds preferred to work as an independent or university-based researcher, rather than directly for government or business. There was two-thirds support for the government commissioning an audit among stakeholders to identify priorities for multicultural research across the country. One third supported the proposition that “governments rarely use the research they commission in the multicultural field”, suggesting that for some researchers a trust problem exists in relation to future collaborations with government.

Q2

Thinking of the research structures within which you have undertaken work on multicultural Australia, which of these have you worked in: (mark all that apply)

Multiple Choice



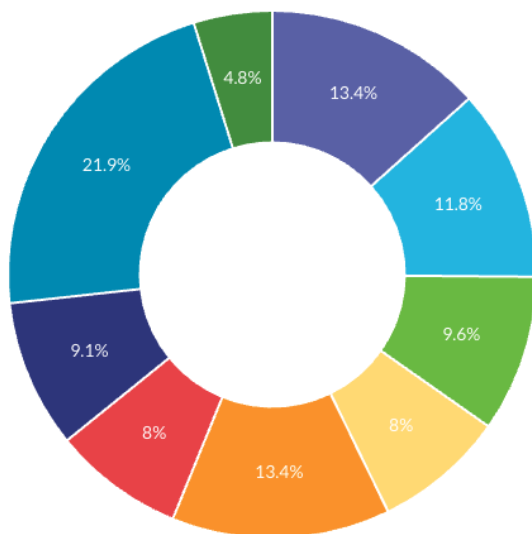
Choice	Total
NGO or Not For Profit	24
Private Company	4
Government Department or Agency or Inquiry	14
Government Research Agency	5
University Department	38
University Research Centre	25
University Research Institute	14
Cross-University Centre	7
Collaborative Research Centre	4
Independent consultant or contractor	12
Other	13

Question 2 demonstrates the range of work experiences of respondents – two thirds had worked in University Departments, 40% had worked in NGOs or NFPs, while about 23% had worked for government. About 40% had worked in a research centre.

Q4

In considering how multicultural research should be supported, up to which three of these options would you be most to support ?

Multiple Choice



Choice	Total
ARC Collaborative Research Centre	25
Statutory Research Agency, such as the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs 1980-1986 (AIMA)	22
Bureau in Government Policy Department, such as the Bureau for Immigration Multicultural and Population Research 1988-1996 (BIMPR)	18
University Research Centre, such as the Centre for Multicultural Studies Wollongong 1978-1990	15
Transdisciplinary Research Institute, such as the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation	25
Private/university collaborative project, such as the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute	15

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More loosely associated "Project" with inter-organisational collaboration, such as the Challenging Racism Research Project 	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A virtual institute with a small real hub and a national 'virtual' network that can include university researchers, NGOs, business, civil society, unions and other stakeholders, such as a National Institute for Cultural Diversity 	41
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Other 	9

When asked to consider what models of research organisation would they support, two thirds opted for a virtual institute with a small real hub and virtual cross-sectoral network.

Survey respondents were asked to describe what they saw as the most pressing research issue for multicultural Australia. A significant minority identified racism and anti-racism as the most important focus. Others identified a range of issues: that research should explore the uniqueness of the Australian experience and situation, the role of religion as a facilitator or barrier to integration, the detailed experiences of settlement, the importance of interculturalism as a modifier of the pluralism of multiculturalism, the challenges of super-diversity, making access and equity work more effectively, the critical need to improve capacity in health care, and exploring arts and cultural access and engagement. There were also concerns with the recruitment and involvement of younger researchers from diverse backgrounds ("would the old White guys get out of the way please"). The enrichment of community capacity to undertake research was important for some – ranging from community history, to project needs-analysis and evaluation. Renewed research institutions, accessible relevant and uniform data, and reintegrating White Australians into the multicultural story were also emergent themes.

An audit example: understanding Canadian multiculturalism

One approach to an audit that may serve as a guide in Australia, was that undertaken by Will Kymlicka for Immigration and Citizenship Canada (Kymlicka, 2010). Having canvassed the country province by province, he demonstrated the differences and commonalities within the research being undertaken at the time, and arrived at a proposal for ten common research themes that could be supported by government. These included pan-Canadian issues of the adaptation of multiculturalism to religious diversity, the challenge of racism and discrimination, the issues associated with labour market integration, immigration outside the major cities, security issues and multiculturalism, and the future of multiculturalism given the rising hostile debate in Europe and elsewhere. These will be very familiar to Australian readers. In addition he noted the particular relevance of relating multiculturalism to Aboriginal peoples, the vulnerability of groups such as women and youth (and one can add people with disabilities), patterns of ethnic community formation and the capacity or readiness of service delivery agencies to respond to the needs of multicultural communities. All of these also resonate with Australian circumstances. The value of the audit lay in part in the buy-in it generated among researchers from various sectors across the country, into a national conversation about research priorities.

The place of history: retaining memory

It is apparent from the submissions to inquiries and the reporting by researchers that history as a process, the exploration of heritage and the understanding of the past engagements

across cultures, should play a central role in any research agenda or structure seeking to illuminate or serve multicultural Australia. Two key historical initiatives are currently in imminent peril of being lost to future generations, partly as a result of rapidly changing technologies of memory, partly as their content has been frozen in time.

The two editions of the *The Australian People: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, edited by James Jupp (in 1988 and 2001), provide an extraordinary but increasingly inaccessible and ageing resource. The expanded and revised second edition was published with support from the Australian Population Immigration and Multicultural Research Program by Cambridge University Press, and copyright is held by the Commonwealth. With nearly a 1000 pages of text and illustrations, it is a unique resource for all the stakeholders from citizens to bureaucrats, scholars to teachers. It is exactly the type of resource that should be made available in an accessible format online, and integrated into a program of updates and revisions on a permanent basis.

Making Multicultural Australia in the 21st century (<http://multiculturalaustralia.edu.au>) was originally created in the late 1990s as one of Australia's first educational CD ROMS, with support from the NSW government. In the 2000's it was migrated to the Internet with support from the NSW, Victorian and Queensland governments, the Australian Cultural Foundation, and Optus Communications. It was last revised in 2010, though it is still widely used in education and by researchers all over the world. It is one of the few (if not sole) repositories for many "grey" publications from Australia's multicultural history, and is supported by a major archive of interviews, social documents, and media resources. However its future is affected by the lack of any ongoing "host" institution, with its only Internet presence doomed to be a file on the Pandora archive. Its invaluable content should also be a part of a continuing research and publishing process, feeding Australia's thirst for insights into the history of multiculturalism and the people who have been so much part of its development.

What are the main Data issues?

Research and data are intimately related though their relationship can be complex. Research questions determine methodologies which then establish criteria for what type of data is relevant. At times the availability of data determines what research questions can be asked and therefore what knowledge can be gleaned. Data includes qualitative and quantitative, historical documentary, and the original research that can be expressed through creative works.

The Immigration Minister Andrew Giles raised the issue of "data" while in Opposition prior to the 2022 election when he pointed to data failures as being important determinants of discriminatory and dangerous outcomes during the COVID 19 pandemic in Melbourne.

In summary the data issues that seem the most pressing include:

- a. Unlike the USA, Canada, the UK or New Zealand, Australia has no mainstream data that allow us to determine whether racism is occurring other than through proxies such as country of birth, ancestry identification, language spoken or religion;
- b. the collection and use of data about cultural and linguistic differences can be haphazard, crude, ambiguous and misleading (Pham et al., 2021);

- c. when CALD data are collected and applied the results may be suppressed due to governance fears of stigmatisation of identifiable groups;
- d. some government concerns include that individuals from CALD backgrounds might refuse to participate in normal data sharing due to fears of surveillance;
- e. current data models such as the ABS CALD stack may misrepresent realities that are better seen through labels such as “ethnicity” (ruled out in 1999 when “Ancestry” was chosen’ but under the discussion by ABS for the 2026 Census) or “racialised” (used to label experiences of professionals from Africa facing workplace discrimination);
- f. the availability of large data sets, such as those created through MADIP/PLIDA. fundamentally transforms the research act, changing ethical relationships and understandings.

Studies such as those undertaken at the AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2023) demonstrate that Australian data collection at the source often cannot aid in research questions on cultural diversity. Sample sizes are not shaped to ensure reliable reportage in the area, while many research projects simply fail to recognise the traditional owners or members of minority groups. Yet awareness of the data issues and regularity of data collection could be improved through system-changing decisions. For example, any Commonwealth-funded research could be required to collect the key data from the CALD core group list and, while assuring data security, make it available to other legitimate researchers through one of the national data archives online.

Research structures

We have looked at the development and underdevelopment of research, the contemporary lack of any national agendas, and the randomness of research clusters. Many of the comments on the researchers’ survey pointed to the need for a clear model and implementation of a research structure, to complement the agendas that may be adopted. We now briefly review what structures have been attempted and their benefits and drawbacks.

Research and policy committees – the role of the founders Zubrzycki, Price, Martin, Encel, Borrie

If we begin with the period around the adoption of the concept of “multicultural Australia” we find a plethora of changing advisory committees to government, often forming then being amalgamated, then being reframed and redirected, each with its membership either continuing or being replaced. Much of the dynamic occurred in the relationship between the Australian National University and the Department of Immigration, with a small network of researchers involving one another in the utilisation of research. It is at this period we find sociologists such as Jerzy Zubrzycki, Sol Encel and Jean Martin, and demographers such as “Mick” Borrie and Charles Price playing a key role – summarising field research and translating into useable policy evidence.

Inquiries – Galbally Jupp Racist Violence

Policy inquiries often triggered research and use them extensively in their deliberations. While the Galbally Inquiry was fairly limited on the specifics of research other than in relation to AIMA, the Poverty Inquiry generated a number of new studies by contracted university researchers or research centres (Henderson, 1975). Similarly the Jupp Inquiry (Jupp, 1986) opened up research studies in a number of areas, as did the later Inquiry into Racist Violence (Moss and Castan, 1991). A reactivated MAIS could provide curated access to such material.

Government Institutes etc. – AIMA, AIHW, AIFS, ABS

Where there has been recognition by government of the need for ongoing research support to program areas, Institutes have been established, usually to support specific legislated activities. We have already seen the benefits and problems associated with the model when implemented as AIMA.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) was created in 1980 under the 1975 Family Law Act, and is responsible to the Minister for Social Services. It undertakes its own research with-in house staff, commissions reports, runs an annual conference, publishes its work in academic peer reviewed journals, and publishes its own journal. Its fourteen research programs include “Building a New Life in Australia”, which is a longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants who arrived in 2013 (Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), n.d.).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) was created in 1987 under its own Act, with a Board responsible to parliament through the Minister for Health. It has statutory functions in relation to statistical information, while being involved in data collection and management, producing reports, and enhancing data resources. AIHW has noted the poor level of data in relation to health and disability for culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2020) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2023).

The critical role of the ABS is best demonstrated in the provision of data linkage services, now intensified through the establishment in 2015 of the whole of government Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), n.d.) curated by the ABS, and in process for a name change to “Personal-level integrated data asset” (PLIDA) (Gruen, 2023). In part the Life Course Data Asset initiated in July 2023 seeks to support what the Australian Statistician has called “evidence-based policy making at the community level” (Gruen, 2023), including data on culture, migration and other demographics.

Government Agencies – OMA, BIMPR

The in-house agencies were the Office and the Bureau in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, complementary but with different initial functions – one driven by policy designed to engage with diversity, the other by the need for knowledge creation about diversity. Both undertook and commissioned research, though with different intents and user-outcomes. As noted, the agencies were both closed-down within months of the Coalition gaining power in 1996,

suggesting their vulnerability as institutional forms to ideological perspectives and the consequent budget priorities.

Commissions- HREOC State of the Nation, CyberSafety

Various government commissions are also established by statute, though they have executive powers in pursuit of social betterment outcomes. The Australian Human Rights Commission administers the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, and seeks through conciliation to resolve offending actions, including racial vilification. The Commission, depending on its resources, can retain researchers to undertake projects related to its activities. Such research is focussed on identifying experiences of vulnerable groups, and developing strategies for engagement with racism and building social cohesion under the community education role of the Commission. In the past the Commission has published reports about “The State of the Nation”, exploring the condition and experiences of “people of non-English speaking backgrounds (Antonios, 1995)”.

The Cyber Safety Commissioner develops eSafety strategies supported by research to promote online safety. In a time of hate speech and racist disinformation the Office has been particularly focussed on the targets for hate groups. These include culturally diverse communities whose religion and appearance have attracted the attention of both group and personal hate attackers (eSafetyCommissioner, n.d.).

Universities – individuals, groups, centres, institutes and Collaborative Research Centres

The tertiary education sector has a long history of research in many disciplinary areas reflecting on multicultural Australia. In the current environment of reduced funding, most initiatives have been reworked as collaborative enterprises, drawing in inter-disciplinarity while combining resources and capacities. These projects are established under the legal responsibility of the universities, which are mainly covered by State legislation though heavily funded by the Commonwealth (and students through fees). This collaborative model enhances the impact, allowing the creation of flexible project teams formed for the purposes of the project, meeting State criteria for local involvement, and extending networks of communication about the research.

One example of this project model is the Cyber Racism and Community Resilience Project, which in 2011 gained funding support from the ARC, the participating universities, the Human Rights Commission and VicHealth, with publication in 2017 and thereafter. It comprised researchers from Deakin University CRIS, the Western Sydney University Challenging Racism group, the University of Technology Sydney Cosmopolitan Civil Societies group, Sydney University Psychology, Monash University Journalism, and the civil society Online Hate Prevention Institute. This team produced a tightly woven argument about racism and the Internet, and the nature and extent of racism in Australia (Jakubowicz et al., 2017).

NGOs – Scanlon Foundation, Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF) and the Diversity Council of Australia.

The NGO sector contains many organisations which engage with research on multicultural Australia. The three mentioned here demonstrate importantly different characteristics in relation to focus, methodology and scope.

The Scanlon Foundation, a private foundation funded by its founder, established in 2001 and its Research Institute established in 2019 seeks to be “a bridge between academic insight and public thought on matters relating to social cohesion”. It offers its services to governments, which contract it to provide reports based on its research. Its publications include “narratives”, which are long form journalism pieces rather than peer-reviewed academic articles, geared towards servicing public debate, and have expanded to podcasts and videocasts. After many years of mapping social cohesion (Markus, 2015) it has recently developed a more ambitious project through its independent Institute that investigates social cohesion through the Australian Cohesion Index (O’Donnell, 2022). This work is partly supported by a research contract with the Department of Home Affairs.

The Australian Multicultural Foundation, a project funded through the Bi-Centennial Authority in 1988, was created out of the “ruins” of AIMA. In a joint exercise between FECCA and AIMA (in its last year), the proposal set the parameters for a \$3 million grant from the Authority, which remains the resource basis of the AMF’s continuing operations. It also receives funding for projects, and invests in others. Its primary operation is through collaborations with other organisations, including both the Scanlon project on social cohesion and the CRIS research into social resilience and inclusion.

The Diversity Council of Australia represents the perspective of the human resources sector in corporates, governments, education and civil society. It is resourced by its membership, and develops collaborative research with universities, often through the device of ARC Linkage Grants (DCA Research, 2023). Its reports include coverage of culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership, and racism at work.

Proposal for a Multicultural Research Framework

Options

The following grid draws on the analysis and arguments above to constitute a SWOT analysis of the options canvassed in this submission. The matrix of preferred elements has been summarised, though vulnerability to ideological fashion, frameworks that enhance co-operation, useability to the widest range of stakeholders, and impact on policy and practice in government professional and community spheres, are all identifiable factors.

Option	Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat	Examples
Status Quo	Diversity	Scattered priorities	Emerging collaborations, multiple perspectives	No national agenda, erosion of capacity,	ARC, Scanlon, other centres

Statutory Institute	Legislated, clear objectives	Constrained by government resources and ideology	Sustained research program	Marginalises non-partners	AIMA, AIHW
Whole of Government policy and research Institute	Close to centre of government, integrates policy with research	Dominated by government short term issues	Provides global view of government and integrates different perspectives	Diminishes role of non-government research. Easy to close down	OMA
Department Research Bureau	Close fit with policy priorities, enables partnerships	Dependent on annual Dept budget, depends on partnerships	Positions research at core of depart. business	Marginalises exploratory research, Easy to close down	BIMPR
Collaborative research centre	Provides intellectual and impact drivers for research, builds collaboration and flexible partnerships	Depends on annual funding and collaborator buy-in,	Enables independent research, builds on national strengths, multiple funding sources	Vulnerable to policy changes and funding cuts, overly focused on impact at expense of critical review and developing community oriented research capacity	CRIS
Hub Spoke Research Institute	National ambit, web of learning enables new players, enhances sharing of research outcomes and problem definition	Requires ongoing agreement	Enhances international comparative research, integrates academic, government and civil society stakeholders, optimises social benefit	Sustainability of structure, managing multiple forms of research, ensuring flexibility of hub relationship with stakeholder spokes	International models

Best fit to needs

National Hub and Spoke Collaborative Research Institute

This submission concludes that the proposition that should be developed to implement MFR goals in relation to a sustained and sustainable research agenda and structure, can best be achieved through a hub and spoke model that invites collaboration, gives security of funding, and has extensive networks of stakeholders across the widest range of research practices and goals. Whatever format the “hub” takes, it should be resourced through a similar device as that used to establish the Australian Multicultural Foundation, namely a major grant to an independent stand-alone entity, reinforced with philanthropic and recurrent funding, from states, territories and the Commonwealth, and other partnership and project funding. Its research should be made as widely available as feasible, in both traditional and contemporary formats, addressing a diversity of audiences from communities to specialists. It should have a membership structure, an advisory panel, and seek to stimulate wide engagement with and understanding of issues associated with building a multicultural society, integrating intersectional and intercultural awareness.

The ten recommendations and propositions in this submission are designed to create a process that ensures the sensible and measured consideration of the range of interests, diversity of approaches, and scale of needs across the community.

Recommendations to the MFR in this submission

1.The MFR recognises the centrality of a well-designed and supported research capacity to the efficient and effective implementation of a national multicultural framework.

2.The MFR recommends that a properly resourced trans-disciplinary audit is undertaken of Australia’s multicultural research capacities, priorities, and stakeholder needs.

3.The MFR recommends that the government initiate and resource a national Summit conference on research agendas for multicultural Australia, through the creation of a cross sectoral steering group, emphasising the involvement of emerging researchers from diverse communities.

4.The MFR proposes the establishment of a sustainable cross-sectoral National Multicultural Research Institute and recommends a process to scope and establish such an Institute.

5.The MFR recommends the government calls for expressions of interest by parties in leading and participating in the establishment of the National Multicultural Research Institute, using a hub and spoke model.

6.The MFR recognises the critical importance of multidisciplinary data in underpinning a national research agenda, and proposes that parameters for data definition, collection and availability are considered as part of the proposed Audit and Summit.

7. The MFR notes the negative consequences of the failure by governments during the pandemic to implement the protocols on the use of CALD data agreed nationally in 1999, and recommends that until new agreements on data are reached, the CALD protocol for the use of minimum core data (namely language spoken, country of birth, fluency in English and Indigenous status) are activated in all situations where that data is relevant, and the additional relevant CALD indicators are also collected where required (eg religion, parental countries of birth). Furthermore, if the ABS adopts “Ethnicity/Ethnic group” as a question in the 2026 Census, then this factor be added to the CALD core group for data collection by governments.

8. First measures are required to retain and recover cultural memory in danger of degradation and loss. In order to ensure an improved access to existing data, the MFR recommends to the Department of Home Affairs that it re-establish the Multicultural Australia and Immigration Studies (MAIS) data base previously produced by its library and published through *Informat*, extend it to provide access to useable data in collaboration with ABS and other government agencies and the Australian Social Science Data Archive and similar archives, remove the block on its use by the Australian public service, and ensure it is made available as a free service to the wider stakeholder population of Australia. Furthermore, the MFR should propose that DHA considers how to ensure the digitisation and publication online of the contents of *The People of Australia 2001* (ed. J Jupp) (© Commonwealth of Australia), and develops and implements a plan for its safe continuation and updating. In addition, the MFR recommends that DHA develops a method to retain and update for ongoing public access the web documentary project *Making Multicultural Australia in the 21st Century*.

9. In considering the roles of the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in supporting research for a multicultural Australia, the MFR recommends that the Councils adapt and adopt the US National Institutes of Health Policy on the Inclusion of Racial and Ethnic Minority groups, in requirements for the grant of research funding. In addition, research data made available through platforms such as the Social Science Data Archive should be required to adopt a common and accessible framework for the secure sharing of data on intersectional, multicultural issues.

10. The MFR recommends that the Australian Bureau of Statistics review the use of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity as a concept, in terms of

- its current relevance,
- its capacity to identify targets of racism,
- its coverage of ethnicity,
- how it can better identify literacy levels in both English and languages used at home for emergency communication,
- its useability by governments and contracted services (eg diagnostic laboratories)
- how well it covers whole of population (eg Australian born, Australian-born parents, English speaking, and Australian ethnicity, as well as potentially marginalised minorities).

Appendix

Selected Projects from the 1990s

OMA

http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/multoff_4.pdf

[Access and Equity Annual Report 1995 OMA and DPM&C AGPS, 1995,](#)

[Accessing Legal Aid - Access to Legal aid and assistance by people of non-English speaking background OMA and DPM&C AGPS, 1995](#)

[Australia's Hidden Heritage Winternitz, Judith, Dr AGPS and OMA, 1990](#)

Cultural Differences and Conflict in the Australian Community Fisher, Linda and Long, Jeremy
The Centre for Multicultural Studies, Uni of Wollongong, 1991

Different Agenda: Economic and Social Aspects of the Ethnic Press in Australia Bell, Phillip;
Heilpern, Sandra; McKenzie, M; Vipond, J The Centre for Multicultural Studies, Uni of
Wollongong, 1991

Diversity Counts - A Handbook on Ethnicity Data OMA and DPM&C AGPS, 1994

Immigrants and Occupational Welfare: Industry Restructuring and its effects on the
Occupational Welfare of Immigrants from NonEnglish Speaking Backgrounds Jamrozik,
Adam; Boland, Cathy; and Stewart, Donald The Centre for Multicultural Studies, Uni of
Wollongong, 1990,

BIMPR commissioned but not completed 1996

http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/bimpr_1.pdf

Australian Poverty: Then and Now Ruth Fincher Australian Centre University of Melbourne

The Initial Labour Market Experiences of Immigrants Lynne Williams, Jill Murphy and Clive
Brooks Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research

The Labour Market Experience of Second generation Australians Clive Brooks Bureau of
Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research

Settlement Needs of Black Africans in Australia David Cox La Trobe University

Two Decades Later: An Evaluation of the Changes Made in the Role of Ethnic Welfare

Organisations in the Provision of Social Services for Migrants Following the Galbally Report

Thea Brown and Kim Chu Monash University

Atlas of the Australian People - 1991 Census Australian Capital Territory Ian Burnley

University of New South Wales Northern Territory Graeme Hugo University of Adelaide

Queensland Richard Jackson James Cook University of North Queensland Tasmania Andrew
Beer, Cecile Cutler and Debbie Faulkner Flinders University of South Australia Victoria Chris
Maher and Wayne Caldwell AHURI, Melbourne, Vic. Western Australia Graeme Hugo

University of Adelaide

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