

Engage Pasefika acknowledge the people of the Wurundjeri Country as the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we work, play, travel and raise our families. We stand in solidarity with our First Nations people for Treaty and for the Yes vote. We pay our deep respect to their Elders past and present as the rightful owners of this land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

Always was always will be Aboriginal land.

MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORK REVIEW SUBMISSION

By Engage Pasefika Inc

Making Multicultural Australia Stronger

Engage Pasefika Inc would like to make a submission to amplify Pacific voices living, working and contributing to the Australian Multicultural composition. We are a grassroots community driven organisation to advance Pacific health equity in the northern suburbs of Victoria. Our community like many diverse groups were disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. It highlighted the current social construct and socialised attitudes that exists between those who are dominant vs the subordinate, problematic practices often emanated in our society via the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and power.

We understand inclusivity is conditional on being compliant to the ground rules of Australian multiculturalism. We refer to the policy discussion paper, 'Multiculturalism for All Australians: Our Developing Nationhood' which implied that for mainstream organisations to be relevant to all Australians, it had to go out of their way to understand those with diverse backgrounds. A narrative that marginalises those of diverse backgrounds. The experience for Pasefika communities includes that of tokenism in engagements with various stakeholders. We are involved because we meet the person of colour characterisation, diversity and inclusion label or because the current knowledge systems are outdated for problems in contemporary society and therefore require an outsiders perspective.

Our submission recognises the depth and cultural pluralism that our diverse communities add to the Australian ecosystem to foster community growth, resilience and adaptability. The outcome of the Australian Census 2021 revealed Pacific Islanders with pacific lineage totalled 337,000 an increase of approximately more than 130,000 since the 2016 census. Pacific Island migration to Australia has either been directly from the pacific or through New Zealand. Migration flow that has sought for better development, education, employment and economic prosperity.

However, for a lot of us we recognise the institutional barriers that underpin and prevent equitable access to services, resources and opportunities to flourish in Australia. This includes campaigning against stigma, discrimination and misconceptions against our communities. It must be known that Pacific Islanders are not a homogenous group. There is diversity within Pacific Island cultures that often gets discounted or overlooked. It is known that Australian stakeholders and actors consult minority groups when framing policies, however, Engage Pasefika believe for a lot of our diverse communities we are more than our identity and cultural preservation.

We call for political will that is equity based in solutions, culturally safe, inclusive of invisible Pacific voices, and malleable to unequal conditions that perpetuate inequity. We are not represented in local government policies, state initiatives and commonwealth policy agenda. We are neglected because we have been told that we don't present ourselves as assertive or vocal enough, however we argue this dismisses the problem as a cultural thing rather than on a disengaged, inflexible system that by default is racially contingent.

We would like to draw your attention to the overrepresentation of our young Pacific people in the Australian justice system. Our Pacific young people are not given real attributable pipelines to exercise their potential and agency, instead we are losing them to the limitations of entrenched longstanding policies and models informed without Pacific perspectives. These practices reinforce stereotypical scripts and turn the burden back on community with scarce resources.

We call for the approach of this Multicultural framework review to examine the shortcomings of the multicultural policy and its origins of adding more burden to families and communities that it proclaims to represent and serve. The future of our younger generation needs to be encompassed in this multicultural framework if we are committed to a democracy of

compassion and holistic values that go beyond dominant western ideals. We are asking for a multicultural framework that is intersectional and interrogates the status quo of multiculturalism by turning focus on the inherent systemic issues that create continuous barriers to inclusive access.

Engage Pasefika call for holistic and equitable supports of our Pacific Island Seasonal Workers in Australia. Whilst they are seen as temporary migrants who bridge the gap in these low to medium skilled jobs, we take the position they are knowledgeable migrants bringing in their own contexts to these sectors facing starving labour shortages. They complement and swell the multicultural fabric in rural towns like Shepparton, Mildura and many others dotted around the country, yet are at most risk of health disparity and economic mismanagement. We call on the multicultural framework to consider their experiences and valuable contributions to the liveability and mobility of these regional towns and advocate for improved pathways for them to achieve equitable access to basic human conditions afforded to citizens of Australia.

We urge the Multicultural framework to integrate sustainable partnership with community led Pacific organisations. A partnership that demonstrates a sharing of power, resources, investment and opportunities. To instigate enduring solutions that meet the evolving needs of its community. We implore for more intentional inclusion and representation from our Pasefika organisations, professionals, faith leaders, role models, young people to be invited into decision making spaces. To tackle oppression that adds downward pressure on families and communities.

Engage Pasefika endorses the work of the Multicultural framework review. However, we call on you to engage your organisational and positional power to include all actors of our society in this review. We challenge those in power to probe yourselves on who's voices are not represented in this space, and rarely extended an invitation. The Australia today does not

mirror Australia from 1975 when Multiculturalism was officially endorsed through the Racial Discrimination Act. As reflected in the 2021 Census we are melting pot of 51.5 per cent second generation Australians. We call on increased engagement of Pasefika voices at all levels to bring a perspective that beats critically and lands differently. We believe not only in our people's potential but that of all our diverse communities especially our first nations people.