

- **Data Collection and Research:** Some argue that there is a lack of comprehensive and up-to-date data on multicultural demographics, experiences, and needs, which can hinder evidence-based policymaking.
- **Community Capacity Building:** There is a need for continued investment in building the capacity of community organizations to effectively provide services and support to their communities.
- **Recognition of Indigenous Culture:** While the Multicultural Policy framework acknowledges the value of cultural diversity, some argue that more attention is needed to recognise and respect the culture and rights of Indigenous Australians.
- **Emerging Challenges:** As society evolves, new challenges related to multiculturalism may emerge, such as the impact of technology and changing global dynamics. Critics argue that the policy framework should remain adaptable and responsive to these challenges.

It's important to recognise that the Australian government has made efforts to address some of these issues and challenges over time, and public discourse on multiculturalism continues to shape policy development. Multiculturalism in Australia is an ongoing and evolving process, and policymakers aim to strike a balance between celebrating diversity and addressing the issues and concerns that arise within a multicultural society.

1. Acceptance vs Tolerance

'Acceptance' and 'Tolerance' are two related but distinct concepts when it comes to how individuals and societies approach differences, especially in the context of diversity, culture, and personal beliefs.

Tolerance refers to the ability or willingness to accept the existence of opinions, behaviours, or characteristics that are different from one's own without necessarily agreeing with or embracing them. Tolerance often implies a passive stance. It suggests that while you may not endorse or support what is different, you are willing to coexist with it without hostility or discrimination. Tolerance has its limits. It might mean putting up with something or someone you don't particularly like, but it doesn't necessarily involve empathy, understanding, or approval.

Acceptance, on the other hand, goes beyond mere tolerance. It involves embracing and recognising the worth, value, and legitimacy of something or someone different from oneself. Acceptance is more active and positive. It implies an open-minded, welcoming, and non-judgmental attitude toward differences. Acceptance is not limited to mere coexistence; it often involves understanding, empathy, and a willingness to engage with and learn from what is different.

Tolerance is a basic level of respect that allows for peaceful coexistence despite differences, while acceptance represents a higher level of engagement and respect that involves recognising and valuing those differences. In many contexts, societies and individuals aim to move beyond mere tolerance towards greater acceptance, as it often leads to more harmonious relationships and a deeper understanding of the richness of diversity.

Promoting both tolerance and acceptance is essential in Australia, as in any diverse society. These two concepts are not mutually exclusive and can complement each other in fostering a harmonious and inclusive society. In practice, promoting tolerance is often the initial step towards fostering acceptance. People may not immediately embrace or understand differences, but they can learn to tolerate them. Over time, through education, exposure, and positive interactions, tolerance can evolve into genuine acceptance.

Efforts to promote acceptance in Australia could be done through multicultural education and diversity training in schools and workplaces to promote acceptance and understanding, encouraging community events and programs that bring people from different backgrounds together to foster acceptance, promoting diverse and inclusive representation in media and cultural spaces to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance and promoting leadership and initiatives that actively champion acceptance and diversity at all levels of society.

2. Inclusiveness and Social Cohesion

Acceptance fosters social cohesion and a sense of belonging. When people feel accepted for who they are, they are more likely to actively participate in society and contribute positively. Australia should aim to promote both social cohesion and inclusiveness. These two concepts are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, and they are both essential for building a harmonious, equitable, and prosperous society. Here's why both are important:

Social Cohesion:

- Social cohesion is crucial for maintaining peace and stability within a society. When people from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of unity, belonging, and trust in their community, it reduces the likelihood of social conflict and divisions.
- A cohesive society is more resilient in the face of challenges, whether they are economic, environmental, or social. People are more likely to come together to address common problems when they feel a shared sense of purpose.
- Social cohesion fosters cooperation and collaboration among individuals and communities, which can lead to more effective problem-solving and positive social outcomes.

Inclusiveness:

- Inclusiveness ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal access to opportunities and resources. It promotes fairness and social justice.
- When inclusiveness is prioritized, it allows marginalized or disadvantaged groups to fully participate in society, contributing their skills and perspectives to the benefit of the entire community.
- Inclusiveness is a fundamental principle of human rights, and promoting it aligns with Australia's commitment to upholding these rights.

Efforts to promote social cohesion and inclusiveness can go hand in hand. Here are some strategies that Australia can employ:

- **Diversity Education:** Promote diversity education in schools and communities to increase understanding and respect for different cultures, backgrounds, and identities. This helps reduce prejudices and stereotypes and fosters social cohesion.
- **Community Building:** Facilitate opportunities for diverse communities to come together, interact, and collaborate on shared projects or initiatives. This can help build social connections and strengthen social cohesion.
- **Inclusive Policies:** Develop and implement policies and programs that promote inclusiveness and equal opportunity, including anti-discrimination measures, accessibility initiatives, and support for marginalised groups.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Establish mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disputes in a fair and constructive manner. Effective conflict resolution can prevent divisions within society and enhance social cohesion.

- **Leadership and Role Models:** Encourage leadership that promotes inclusiveness and social cohesion at all levels of society. Positive role models can inspire others to embrace these values.

What issues are faced by Inclusiveness and Social Cohesion?

Inclusiveness and social cohesion, while important for building harmonious and equitable societies, can face various challenges and issues. These challenges can vary by country, region, and community, but some common issues that inclusiveness and social cohesion often confront include:

- **Discrimination and Prejudice:** Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and other factors can undermine inclusiveness and social cohesion. Prejudices and stereotypes can lead to unequal treatment and division within communities.
- **Inequality:** Economic and social inequalities can erode social cohesion. Disparities in income, education, healthcare, and access to opportunities can lead to resentment and a sense of injustice.
- **Cultural and Religious Differences:** Cultural and religious diversity can be a source of enrichment, but it can also lead to tensions, misunderstandings, and conflicts if not managed effectively.
- **Marginalisation:** Some individuals and groups may be marginalised or excluded from full participation in society due to factors like disability, refugee status, or social and economic disadvantage.
- **Urbanisation and Migration:** Rapid urbanisation and migration can create challenges in maintaining social cohesion. Large population movements can lead to cultural clashes and strains on infrastructure and resources.
- **Political Polarisation:** Divisive political ideologies and polarisation can fracture social cohesion, as they can lead to a lack of trust, cooperation, and shared values within a society.
- **Displacement and Disasters:** Natural disasters, armed conflicts, and displacement of populations can disrupt social cohesion by uprooting communities and creating uncertainty and trauma.
- **Digital Divide:** In an increasingly digital world, the digital divide can exacerbate existing inequalities, making it difficult for some individuals and groups to access information, services, and economic opportunities.
- **Lack of Social Capital:** Social capital, which includes trust, social networks, and shared norms, is essential for social cohesion. A lack of social capital can hinder cooperation and collective action.
- **Global Challenges:** Global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and economic crises can strain social cohesion by creating uncertainty and competition for resources.
- **Education and Awareness:** Lack of access to quality education and awareness programs on diversity and inclusiveness can hinder efforts to promote social cohesion.
- **Economic Disruptions:** Economic disruptions, such as job displacement due to automation or economic downturns, can lead to social unrest and hinder social cohesion.
- **Lack of Government Support:** Inadequate government policies and support for social inclusion and cohesion can hinder progress in these areas.
- **Silos:** Forming silos or getting siloed is unhealthy for a multicultural country as it leads to isolation and creates a fertile ground for misinformation which lays the foundation for further disruptions of a harmonious, functional and an equitable society. Both the government and the migrants/migrant communities can work together to ensure that silos are not generated. This can be achieved through education of migrants and service providers.

Addressing these challenges often requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that involves government policies, community engagement, education, and awareness initiatives, as well as efforts to promote dialogue and understanding among diverse groups. Recognising the importance of inclusiveness and social cohesion and actively working to overcome these challenges is vital for creating resilient and harmonious societies.

In conclusion, Australia should not choose between promoting social cohesion or inclusiveness; rather, it should prioritise both. These two concepts work together to create a society where all individuals are respected, included, and have a sense of belonging, ultimately leading to a more harmonious and resilient nation.

3. Impact of discrimination on Multiculturalism

To foster a successful multicultural society, it is essential to address discrimination and promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. This requires not only legal protections against discrimination but also cultural awareness, education, and active efforts to challenge bias and prejudice. Multiculturalism can thrive when societies work collectively to create environments where every individual feels valued, respected, and included.

Discrimination has a significant and detrimental impact on multiculturalism and can undermine the goals of creating diverse, inclusive, and harmonious societies. Discrimination can lead to social divisions and tensions, eroding social cohesion within multicultural societies. When certain groups are marginalised or discriminated against, it can create mistrust, resentment, and hostility among different communities. Discrimination can push individuals and communities into cultural isolation. When people feel unwelcome or face discrimination in mainstream society, they may retreat into their own cultural enclaves, reducing opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and integration. Discrimination undermines the effectiveness of multicultural policies and initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion.

Discriminatory practices can contradict the goals of these policies and create scepticism about their efficacy. Discrimination can discourage cultural exchange and dialogue among different communities. When people fear discrimination or hostility, they may be less willing to engage with others from diverse backgrounds.

Discrimination can challenge Australian values of fairness, equality, and inclusiveness, prompting legislative and policy responses. It can also influence public awareness, advocacy efforts, and community attitudes regarding multiculturalism and diversity. Addressing discrimination is essential for Australia to maintain its commitment to these values and principles and to foster a more inclusive and equitable society. Addressing discrimination against migrants is essential for the success of multiculturalism. It promotes inclusivity, social cohesion, equity, and cultural exchange, fostering a society where individuals from diverse backgrounds can coexist and thrive together.

4. Different Cultural and Family Values and Family Structure

Family structure is essential in multiculturalism because it serves as a critical conduit for the transmission of culture, values, and identity. Strong and supportive family units can contribute significantly to the success of multicultural societies by fostering inclusiveness, preserving cultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion.

Family structure is of paramount importance in Indian culture because it forms the foundation of social, cultural, and ethical values. It fosters a sense of belonging, continuity of traditions, and the nurturing of relationships that are cherished and upheld throughout life. The family structure is not just a physical unit but a deeply ingrained cultural and social institution in India. Indian family structures, like those of other cultural groups, enrich the fabric of Australian multiculturalism. They contribute to the diversity and vibrancy of the nation while maintaining a strong sense of identity, heritage, and community. This combination of cultural preservation and adaptation to the multicultural context is a hallmark of Indian families in Australia.

Some practices are different between countries like child raising and family structure. The family can include 3-4 generations. Parents and grandparents are part of the family. The young adults are part of the family. There is no pressure on adult children to leave home, rather they are encouraged to stay with the family. The definition of an Australian family needs to include such families along with those of others such as single parent. In many families it is preferred that infants sleep with parents. However, in western tradition it is considered unsafe. Service providers need to be educated about various practices and focus on basics of well-being.

There are cultural practices that are not acceptable in Australia such as demand for dowry. All the migrants need to be educated that any level of domestic and family violence, financial abuse, cruelty to animals, etc are not acceptable.

In short, cultural education about family structure is important for promoting diversity, inclusivity, cultural competency, and empathy. It is a vital component of building harmonious and equitable multicultural societies where individuals from all backgrounds can coexist and thrive. Embracing cultural diversity enriches societies and prepares individuals to navigate an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world. At the same time, imparting knowledge and understanding of Australian values and laws is equally important to those migrating to Australia.

5. Elderly family members

The family structure plays a significant role in multiculturalism for several reasons, and its importance cannot be overstated. Families are the foundational units of society, and they serve as microcosms where values, traditions, and cultural norms are passed down from one generation to the next. Strong and supportive family units can contribute significantly to the success of multicultural societies by fostering inclusiveness, preserving cultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion.

Elderly family members hold significant importance in migrant culture, and their role within the family is deeply rooted in cultural traditions and values. Elderly family members are highly regarded and respected in Asian culture. Elderly family members are often considered repositories of wisdom, life experience, and cultural knowledge. They offer valuable guidance and advice to younger generations on various aspects of life, including family, relationships, and moral values. They are responsible for teaching customs, rituals, and cultural practices to younger family members, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage. Elderly family members

offer emotional support and comfort to other family members during times of joy and sorrow. They provide a sense of security and stability within the family unit.

Having said that, elderly parents are discriminated at times with neglect, where family members fail to provide them with the necessary care, attention, and support for their physical and emotional well-being. Discrimination can also manifest in access to healthcare. Some elderly parents may face barriers to accessing necessary medical care, medication, or treatment due to family members' reluctance or financial constraints.

Discrimination against elderly parents can be avoided or reduced by raising awareness about the rights and needs of elderly parents within families and promoting respect, empathy, and understanding among family members. Elderly parents could be provided with counselling, legal assistance, and elder abuse prevention programs, Legal mechanisms, and protections. Involvement in community organisations and activities can help elderly parents maintain social connections and reduce isolation.

The elderly parents spend a lot of their savings, sometimes all of them on educating and then helping their children with their career, marriage and settling down. Sometimes they take out loans or sell their assets. The Australian law does not give any rights to the parents if their adult child dies without a legal will. All rights reside with the partner or the authorities. The authorities do not understand the Indian family system and the partner may not want to share with the parents of the dead child. This creates a double loss for the parents and breaks them completely. We recommend that the Australian Law should give equal right to the parents in such situations as they give to the partner.

6. Ageing Migrant Population

Addressing the needs of the ageing migrant population is important for promoting social inclusion, well-being, and the successful integration of these individuals into the host country. This involves recognising their diversity, providing culturally appropriate services, and fostering a welcoming and inclusive society that values the contributions of aging migrants.

Ageing migrants may have specific cultural and religious preferences and needs related to healthcare, end-of-life care, and burial arrangements. Ensuring that these needs are respected and accommodated can be important. Addressing issues pertaining to ageing population requires a holistic and culturally sensitive approach. It may involve providing access to language support services, culturally competent healthcare, affordable housing options, and programs that promote social inclusion and community engagement. Advocacy groups, community organisations, and government agencies play a crucial role in supporting aging migrants and ensuring that their needs and rights are respected as they age in Australia.

With the increase in ageing migrant population in the country, it's important to provide facilities and services that cater to the ageing population from other diverse cultural groups. These aged care facilities and services should provide:

- Culturally diverse staff
- Cultural activities and celebrations
- Religious support
- Culturally sensitive staff training
- Multilingual resources
- Cultural food choices
- Language assistance
- Community engagement

It is important for families and individuals seeking aged care services for their elderly loved ones from Indian backgrounds to inquire about the cultural competency and support services offered by specific facilities. Additionally, government agencies, multicultural organisations, and advocacy groups often provide resources and guidance for accessing culturally appropriate aged care services in Australia.

7. Leave for special cultural or religious days?

Currently the public holidays are mainly for the special days of the Christian faith. As the country has become multicultural, providing all migrants to have access to two or three days of leave (not to be taken from their annual leave) for their special cultural and/or religious days may make it equitable

8. Multicultural Community Venue

All communities should be able to access appropriate, affordable and safe indoor facilities for cultural, religious and family events that can hold large gatherings and allow their own catering.

Appropriate, affordable and safe outdoor venues are also required outside of the residential areas where sports activities and concerts can be held without disturbing the residents. No such venues exist in the Australian Capital Territory or the ACT hinterland. This creates unnecessary tension and conflict between the communities and the residents that can accelerate into racial discrimination and vilification.

9. Multicultural community centre, Community Organisations, Volunteers and Grants

The community organisations play a very important role in helping with inclusion, social; cohesion, acceptance, awareness and education. They also interact with the government to raise issues and participate in consultations. They are run by volunteers who juggle many responsibilities. The government needs to provide them greater support by providing an accessible and adequate centre where:

- The organisations have a shared space with a kitchenette for small and large meetings, language classes and consultations
- Organisations can store their assets safely in one place. Currently assets are stored in houses of committee members and members of most committees change every year
- Grants should be made available with sufficient funding and easier application process
- Adequate checks and balances are required for acquittals but they should be based on the amount of grant.