

**Submission to  
The Multicultural Framework Review**

**By  
Dr. Teresa De Fazio OAM**

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## Executive Summary

1. Australia has a rich multicultural foundation and has built a sense of identity and pride in its own "brand" of multiculturalism.
2. Multiculturalism has been forged on Australia's migration, and to some extent, intake of refugee and displaced persons.
3. Australia identity is bound up in its sense of belonging and inclusion, it's 'fair go' for all who, however, a sense of community cohesion is not to be taken for granted.
4. Education provides a strong platform to advance and consolidate social cohesion as well as provide opportunities for developing contemporary intercultural and global citizenship skills necessary for economic and social advancement.
5. Young people who have bilingual competence provide an excellent and ready set of skills which can be harnessed through strong community language programs. Support for such programs provide multicultural Australia with a solid foundation.
6. Workplaces and leadership in workplaces have a specific responsibility to engage in equity and inclusive practices to ensure healthy work environments, also, reducing racism based workplace incidents.
7. Setting migrants and refugees up for educational, vocational and social success is critical to ensure strong community connection and economic benefits.

## **Australia's multicultural richness**

Australia has gained much from migration over the years. Progressively, Australia has come to form its identity as a rich multicultural country based primarily on migration (permanent and temporary). People representing various ethnic, cultural and faith groups have contributed to the country in many ways.

Successive governments recognise the contributions of immigrants who have come to Australia in response to active campaigns to attract them to Australia, especially post the Second World War. Each wave of migration has brought skills, knowledge, products and social capital that has provided Australia with expertise, productivity and a sense of civic responsibility. The imperative for the country's progress is to ensure that Australia does indeed represent a place that provides everyone with a 'fair go.' That is, fair and equitable opportunities to contribute and participate in civic society, as well as respecting this for others.

*This submission focusses on three areas as opportunities:*

1. *Languages education and training*
2. *Intercultural development to support global citizenship and social cohesion through education and training as well as the workplace*
3. *Setting refugees and migrants up for success*

### *1. Languages education and training*

There is a plethora of research and investigation into the rich advantage of languages learning and maintenance in terms of economic, social and intellectual capital. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this submission to provide a fulsome discussion, it is important to note that supporting languages learning initiatives in formal and informal settings are regarded as important to building community as well as skills for vocational outcomes.

1.1 Languages are intrinsically linked to culture and provide an impactful way of understanding intercultural ways of being (discussed later). The study of languages opens possibilities to understanding expressions of culture through such forms as art, literature, festivities, historical events, ways of doing and being. As such deepening these understandings provides an effective way of gaining a sense of place, identity leading to a global outlook.

However, there is a distinct lack of recognition and appreciation of the value of languages which is reflected in the accommodation of languages curricula in schooling and at tertiary level.

- a. In terms of school curricula, limited recognition of the value of languages is evidenced through small numbers of hours provided for the study of languages, such programs being relegated to arrangements which provide what can be termed only as 'taster courses' and the difficulty in attracting quality language teachers to the sector.
- b. In terms of tertiary education, the last 20 year period has seen a significant decline in the number and representation of languages available. In fact, many language programs (and colleges/units) have been shut down. This has meant that the pipeline for educationalists, business graduates, health professionals have all gone through with little opportunity to develop languages skills as part of their repertoire. The consequence is that Australia's

reliance on English has been increased, languages and cultural capital that is often a feature of migrant communities- direct and intergenerationally – become overlooked and undervalued.

- c. Whilst internationally, schools, tertiary and adult learning settings privilege bi-lingualism and the study of languages, Australia has a rather poor approach to appreciating the benefits of bi-lingualism - and harnessing these within the community itself.

*This submission supports a review of languages offerings, funding to the tertiary and adult education context, as well as influence by Government would serve the community well in addressing this imbalance.*

1.2 For learners who wish to maintain their mother-tongue or family language, the opportunity to do so also means maintaining a core part of their identity. This then leads to a strong sense of place as a bi-cultural and bi-lingual citizen who can contribute their skills and knowledge to Australia. The children of migrants already have, often, some language and cultural/intercultural fluency – however, this is often lost instead of fostered when young students are not provided with fulsome opportunities to engage in mother-tongue maintenance programs.

1.3 Currently, the community languages education sector provides children of migrants with the opportunity to pursue formalized language studies. The program is admirable in its representation of smaller emerging languages (for instance, Dinka, Oromo) to more established languages which attracts many students (for instance, Mandarin, Arabic).

- a. However, there are challenges with funding streams as well as practical considerations of gaining accommodation to enable delivery of these programs. This applies to difficulties in gaining access to school premises on weekends – as these are often denied or provided at exorbitant rates. The result is that the potential for a thriving community languages program which provides an opportunity to invest in children’s educational capital is lost before children move to secondary school age.
- b. The impact of losing socio-linguistic and cultural capital amongst migrant children, and next generation students, is borne out through intergenerational gaps so that children and grandchildren cannot communicate effectively with older parents/grandparents. The social economic outcome is that more services are then required to manage health, wellbeing, and practical issues, especially around aging.

*This submission urges addressing opportunities for community languages to be supported through sustained and ongoing funding. Further to use its influence to support community language schools in gaining access to accommodation to deliver programs.*

## 2 Intercultural development to support global citizenship and social cohesion

The submission has already provided some discussion on the importance and opportunity to develop understandings and skills around interculturalism which underpin healthy global citizenship and social cohesion. These are critical to education and to the workplace. These are expanded upon below.

### Interculturality and education

- 2.1 Intercultural development through education is a logical and appropriate opportunity. The learning of languages has a particularly advantageous role in exploring interculturalism and preparing young people with global skills. However, interculturalism should not be sole the domain of the language teacher. Rather, these skills should be part of teacher training programs. Firstly, this reflects the learner make-up and opportunity to develop social skills leading to community cohesion and belonging. Secondly, to provide a holistic approach to interculturalism which underpins all curricula.
- 2.2 Whilst there has been some work undertaken to embed interculturality in teaching standards, there have been considerable challenges in the practical evidence of these standards. Research continues to demonstrate that interculturality is often mistaken for cultural competence or awareness and is undertaken through the now famous 'food, flags and festivity' approach to culture.

There is a clear opportunity for the Government to draw on its resources to work with academic institutions to prepare teachers adequately with deeper level skills which are important to quality teaching. Teaching standards whilst articulated in documentation, require practical application.

*This submission supports a review of teacher preparation programs in building intercultural capacity (managing racism and negative behaviours).*

### Workplace responsibility through intercultural leadership

- 2.3 Inclusion, diversity and belonging are often featured in policies and practices in the workplace. This is imperative if we are to have healthy and equitable workplaces which draw on the skills, talents and potential of its multicultural workforce, as well as create a healthy harmonious environment for all to thrive. However, workplaces still struggle with cultural inclusion. This is evidenced through:
  - a. Workplace harassment and bullying based on racism
  - b. Lack of cultural diversity in boards, executive and other leadership roles
  - c. Workplace policies and practices which, whilst focusing on gender inclusion, continue to overlay a cultural lens so that intersectional approaches are lost or minimized.

Workplace champions of cultural inclusion need to develop more than just cultural awareness to provide effective leadership. Intercultural leadership skills are pivotal to any leadership position. Whilst there has been training in gender equity through such leadership organisations as the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and Business Graduate Schools, Educational leadership institutes and peak bodies, there is a notable need for such organisations to catch up to community expectations of inclusive leadership. That is, to reflect the multicultural community.

The proposed National Anti-Racism Framework provides an opportunity to work with leadership training organisations, as well as directly with industry.

*This submission supports work undertaken through the Framework and other vehicles to include:*

- i. Establishing leadership standards around inclusion and equity*
- ii. Funding for capacity building around the provision of intercultural leadership skills as a way to engage in anti-racism in the workplace, and provide a strong belonging culture*
- iii. Ensuring that Government funded organisations who undertake research into multicultural themes in the workplace provide open access to these resources so that learning and discussion is enabled.*

### 3. Setting migrants and refugees up for success

Students from migrant and refugee backgrounds seek to both settle and succeed in Australia. As a result they are highly motivated as they move into training, education and vocational pathways. However, as research has consistently demonstrated, support mechanisms, whilst an upfront investment, result in strong outcomes. Support is required to ensure that pre-arrival experiences are informed and adequate.

Adapting to a new country, language, culture, and educational environment are all complex and challenging. This is particularly true of young people who are often the intermediaries between parents and their new country as adults set about working, whilst young people access education and become familiar with Australia's systems.

Support mechanisms for young migrants and refugees ensure engagement in education and training, which in turn leads to strong economic and social benefits.

*This submission urges the Government to explore opportunities for strengthening:*

- community based pre-accredited language and literacy training for adult learners to ensure strong settlement outcomes and lessening the burden of welfare, as well as on children of migrants who have their own settlement issues*
- adequate access to English as an additional language programs to ensure not just the basic English skills required for survival, but to be able to engage competently and increase chances of settlement and vocational success.*
- targeted approaches to ensuring settlement support young people in schools (eg. through multicultural worker programs).*

## **Dr. Teresa De Fazio OAM (MAICD)**

### **Summary bio**

Dr. Teresa De Fazio OAM has a strong background as an academic in the fields of education, inclusion and equity and leadership.

Teresa is the Director of Intersect Global Partners. The organisation focuses on supporting a broad range of equity and inclusion initiatives with corporate, government and not for profit entities. She also consults in educational practice, research, and evaluation. She is an Adjunct Fellow of Victoria University.

Teresa was awarded the Order of Australia in 2021 for her services to tertiary education. The work for which she is known relates to ensuring that all students have access to the transformational opportunities' education can provide – and that inclusive and equitable practices underlie these educational experiences. She draws on her own lived experiences to engage with community members and support social cohesion.

As an active academic, she has a strong speaker and publications background as, she has published various books, many reports and papers and presented at both nationally and international conferences.

A passionate advocate for multiculturalism, she was appointed as Commissioner for the Victorian Multicultural Commission by the Victorian Government.

Teresa, is the recently appointed Chairperson of Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE). She is a Board Director for Zoos Victoria, and former Board Director of Multicultural Arts Victoria and Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services. She is also a Community Ambassador for Melbourne Victory Football Club and Love of Languages. She also works as a freelance journalist and writer.