



Multicultural Council of Tasmania

Submission to Federal Labor's Multicultural Engagement Taskforce

The Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT) is the peak body representing more than 80 multicultural organisations in Tasmania.

We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to federal Labor's multicultural policy review. Our comments cover a range of specific policy areas.

Citizenship

There should be no waiting period between the achievement of permanent residency and the ability to apply for and be granted citizenship. If a permanent resident meets the criteria for citizenship then this demonstrates that person's loyalty and suitability, in which case delay serves no purpose. Currently the waiting period is one year, and there have been proposals to extend this to four years.

Foreign interference and influence

Australians with a culturally, and linguistically diverse (CALD) background are as much the victims of interference and influence from foreign governments as other Australians. In many instances CALD Australians migrated to Australia to avoid interference and influence from those foreign governments.

At the same time, there is strong interest among CALD Australians for preserving Australia's liberal democracy.

Therefore, there is considerable support among CALD Australians for laws that counter foreign interference and influence, provided that they do not undermine the democratic sharing and debating of ideas. Such undermining could occur if onerous registration and intrusive reporting requirements had to be complied with in order to engage in political debate.

Discrimination

The Federal Government should continue to counter racial and religious discrimination. The first duty of the Federal Government in this regard is to not itself be a party to racial and religious discrimination.

Racial discrimination



If eligibility to work in the Australian Public Service is to remain restricted to citizens, then the waiting period between the achievement of permanent residency and the ability to apply for and be granted citizenship should be abolished. This would ensure that CALD Australians with permanent residency are not denied access to one of the largest employers in Australia.

Religious discrimination

CALD Australians are as supportive of the separation of church and state as other Australians. In many instances a motivation to migrate to Australia was to leave a theocracy.

To protect the separation between church and state, the National School Chaplaincy Program should be wound up. This program effectively uses taxpayer funds to promote theology, despite the directive for chaplains not to proselytise under the program.

Similarly, the Lord's Prayer should not be recited to open each sitting of the Houses of Representatives and Senate.

Reconciliation

Ethnic community councils should be included in reconciliation discussions to ensure that the humility, respect and gratitude of the newest Australians are taken into account when pursuing reconciliation with the oldest Australians.

Aged care and disability services

Australians with a non-English speaking background may find their English language skills deteriorate in their old age or as the result of injury. Accordingly, there should be additional NDIS and aged care funding for Australians with a non-English speaking background, to reflect the additional costs of purchasing personal services delivered in languages other than English.

Immigration

Immigration policy should serve incumbent Australians.

Immigration and the labour market

Concerns about wages and jobs do not justify restrictions on migration levels. Any increase in labour supply driven by migrants is typically matched by an increase in the supply of capital, given Australia's open economy. As a result migration need not affect the employment opportunities or wages of incumbent Australian workers.



Restrictions on the work rights of migrants (e.g. restricted work hours, restricted occupations) are similarly unwarranted and contrary to the interests of incumbent Australians. These restrictions limit the capacity of migrants to contribute to Australia and be self-sufficient.

Restrictions driven by concerns about wages and jobs are remnants of the White Australia Policy that Labor and the union movement should disown, as these restrictions do nothing to protect incumbent Australian workers.

Humanitarian migration

Australia should have a generous humanitarian intake reflecting that there is great generosity among incumbent Australians, and that funding humanitarian migration does more good than the equivalent amount of foreign aid.

Each humanitarian migrant should be offered best practice settlement services to facilitate long term contributions from humanitarian migrants and to bolster social cohesion. The budgetary impact of humanitarian migration should be calculated and publicised to assist public discussion of the effectiveness of humanitarian migration, including compared to foreign aid.

Student, family reunion and skilled migration

Charges for student, family reunion and skilled visas should cover the associated administration costs and the estimated costs of additional congestion caused by migration. The revenue from such charges, and the routine imposition of health, criminal and character checks on all migrants, should be widely publicised to help dispel myths that immigration is detrimental and that migrants generate more costs than benefits.

Education providers should be taxed on their profits from international students, notwithstanding the current tax-exempt status of many education providers. This would ensure that there is a clear public benefit from the migration of international students (rather than just a benefit to education providers).

Policing and community development

Various policing and community development policies should be adopted to support multicultural Australia. However, as such policies are matters for State and Territory Government, we do not recommend they form part of federal Labor's multicultural policy.