

Submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry into Strengthening Multiculturalism

Australian Psychological Society

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May 2017

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1. Introduction

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Senate Inquiry into ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion.

The APS has a long history of involvement on matters relating to multiculturalism and social cohesion, including developing a number of position papers and resources and has several member groups interested in the topic.

Most recently, in 2016, the APS [hosted a roundtable on *Social Cohesion*](#) with people from various domains of psychology and service provision. The Roundtable revolved around [five catalytic speakers](#) and identified important insights from psychology about how to promote social cohesion in a multicultural society. Five basic, but important "best practice" insights from psychological science to promote social cohesion included:

1. Understanding what factors promote social cohesion and why it breaks down
2. Strengthening people's identities
3. Focusing on community strengths (not punitive measures)
4. Providing safe ways to express conflict
5. Promoting cultural competence.

Strengthening multiculturalism is inherently linked with ensuring Australia is a socially inclusive community. Social inclusion is linked to better mental health and wellbeing at both an individual and community level. The ability and opportunity to participate in the community, to have access to services and relationships that are available to the majority of people in society, is linked to an increased sense of inclusion and belonging.

Policies, laws and services that promote fairness, inclusion and value cultural and linguistic diversity are key to building an inclusive, welcoming and safe community for all Australians. This has multiple benefits, one of which is enhanced mental health and wellbeing.

Overwhelmingly Australia has had a successful experience of multiculturalism over a period of five decades. Australia prides itself as a safe, peaceful, multicultural society, with community support for multiculturalism found to be high (in excess of 75% since the 1980s e.g., Scanlon Foundation, 2016). Based on existing measures, Australia has a high degree of social cohesion, particularly given its diversity.

While research has shown a high level of support for multiculturalism and immigration and that most reject blatantly racist attitudes, attitudes which may underlie discrimination and intolerance are held by a sizeable (through still a minority) of people (Dunn, Forrest, Babacan, Paradies & Pedersen, 2011; VicHealth, 2012a, 2012b).

So while the expression of racism and prejudice may have changed over recent decades from overt to more covert and subtle forms, there is strong evidence to suggest that it is still prevalent in Australia (Dunn, 2011; Paradies, 2006; VicHealth 2012a, 2012b). Furthermore, references to 'everyday' and 'low level' racism (McDermott, 2008; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2008) indicate that racism is so prevalent and pervasive that it has become part of everyday language and behaviour.

Racism and discrimination, and fears about violent extremism and terrorist acts pose a significant threat to social inclusion and multiculturalism. In this submission we draw on psychological science to identify strategies to assist people to address their fears and importantly change their behaviours so as to promote rather than further threaten social cohesion. These strategies serve to increase people's sense of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy – which in turn build social cohesion.

Strengthening multiculturalism involves an overarching vision for a multicultural Australia which is inclusive and wide-reaching in its notion of 'multiculturalism'. This involves moving away from the approach which has characterised recent debates in Australia that conflate issues of immigration and citizenship with cultural diversity, and goes beyond a focus on 'food and festivals' to foster a community wide understanding of multiculturalism. This agenda should address racism, discrimination and inequality experienced by migrants and refugees, and consciously work to ensure that our diversity enriches social and community institutions and networks to ensure a stronger society for all (Babacan & Ben-Moshe, 2008).

The APS is aware of debates about the use of the term 'multiculturalism' and proposed alternatives such as 'interculturalism' or 'polyculturalism' (e.g. Morris et al., 2015). In summary, multiculturalism has been challenged for being passive and out of touch, with its view of culture as static and discrete not helpful in moving race relations in Australia forward. In contrast, polyculturalism acknowledges the dynamic and ongoing intercultural interactions which result in cultures that are continually evolving. In the context of this Inquiry, the APS believes that, regardless of the term that is used, the Government could benefit from examining how existing policies and their assumptions about cultural relations may impact on social inclusion and cohesion.

For example, recent research on the complex process of developing a sense of cultural and social identity and belonging points to the need for migrants to maintain their cultural identity as key to sense of self, while supporting new ways to understand the self in the resettlement context. Research on identity shows that both strength within groups and strong links between groups are important in building social cohesion.

While our understanding is that the role and experiences of Indigenous Australians are beyond the scope of this Inquiry, the APS believes that a truly multicultural society embraces, includes and addresses the experiences of all Australians, including Australia's First Peoples. We refer the Committee to the importance of acknowledging Indigenous Australians as the original custodians of the land, and recognising their unique spiritual, social and economic relationship with their land and waters in Australia. This primary acknowledgement should underpin the Inquiry, and governments, organisations and individuals should be encouraged to develop connections between Indigenous Australians, migrants, refugees and the broader community.

Recommendation 1: The national multicultural agenda promotes an overarching vision for a diverse Australia which is inclusive, dynamic and wide-reaching in its notion of 'multiculturalism' and makes explicit links to the benefits of diversity for the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

Recommendation 2: There should be an acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians as the first custodians of the land, and recognition of the role Indigenous Australians continue to play in contemporary multicultural society

Recommendation 3: Existing policies and their assumptions about cultural relations should be examined for their impact on social inclusion and cohesion.

2. Responding to the Inquiry

The APS is not in a position to respond to all of the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry, as several of these are outside our area of expertise. Our response focuses mainly on the following Terms of Reference:

(a) the views and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities

The views, voices and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are essential to prioritise in any discussion around multiculturalism. Migrants, refugees and Indigenous communities should be engaged and supported to have a key voice in both the development of the multicultural policy, in all settlement programs and in anti-racism campaigns.

While there is broad, stated community support for multiculturalism, when the voices and experiences of migrants, refugees and Indigenous Australians are considered a different picture emerges. Reporting on the latest Scanlon Foundation Surveys, Markus (2016) highlights that:

- the reported experience of discrimination on the basis of 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion' is significant (it was at 20% in 2016, a significant increase from 15% in 2015).
- continuing the pattern of previous surveys, in 2016 those of a non-English speaking background reported the highest experience of discrimination, 27%, compared to 17% of those born in Australia and 19% of those born overseas in English-speaking countries.
- This pattern of differentiation is also evident when responses are analysed by religion of respondent, with reported experience of discrimination highest for Muslim Australians (31%)

Community sentiment is also mixed in relation to asylum seekers, with some Australians feeling compassion for asylum seekers, but many expressing highly negative or prejudiced attitudes towards them (Markus, 2016). So, racism and attitudes of prejudice are still a problem in Australia, despite high levels of support for multiculturalism and declining reports of discrimination in general. These data caution against complacency, and highlight maintaining social cohesion as an important priority.

Recommendation 4: The views, voices and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically (CALD) backgrounds are essential to prioritise in any discussion around multiculturalism.

Recommendation 5: Experiences of racism and attitudes of prejudice in Australia should be continually monitored, along with community attitudes of support for multiculturalism.

(d) the impact of discrimination, vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief

Impact of racism on health, particularly psychological health

There is compelling evidence of a link between ethnic and race-based discrimination and poor mental health and wellbeing (Paradies, 2006; Paradies et al., 2013). Furthermore, despite being a relatively new field of research, there is already plenty of evidence to indicate that racism has a detrimental impact on physical health (Anderson, 2013; Dolezsar, McGrath, Herzig, & Miller, 2014). Recent research has examined the multiple pathways through which racism can affect both mental and physical health, which can include impacts via psychological stress, assault, and denial of goods, resources or services (Paradies et al., 2013).

Specifically, research has shown that humiliation is a defining characteristic of situations that lead to depression even after other risk factors for depression have been statistically controlled (Brown, Harris & Hepworth, 1995; Farmer & McGuffin, 2003).

Race-based discrimination has been found to be related to negative health outcomes in children as well as adults – particularly mental health outcomes (e.g. depression, anxiety and psychological distress) (Priest et al., 2012). Consistent relationships have been found between self-reported discrimination and poor mental health outcomes (Gee, 2002; Harris et al., 2006).

The power of verbal, psychological and emotional abuse can impact at multiple levels:

- such abuse can make the target person or group feel rejected (which has been shown to be linked to depression and anxiety, which in turn affect social cohesion and productivity, as well as mental illness and wellbeing) (Meyer, 2003);
- it serves as a stressor (which affects functioning, and can physiologically flow on to increasing cardiac and stroke risks) (Bijleveld, Scheepers, & Ellemers, 2012); and
- it can lower self-esteem and sense of belonging (Paradies et al., 2013).

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2001) has explicitly stated that racism, prejudice and discrimination are pervasive and persisting challenges for society that have been linked to a range of poor health and mental health outcomes. The APA concluded that racism has been shown to:

- have negative cognitive, behavioural, affective, and relational effects on both child and adult victims nationally and globally, historically and contemporarily
- increase anxiety, depression, self-defeating thoughts and avoidance behaviours, and is linked to a host of medical complications in ethnic minority individuals
- negatively affect ethnic minority children's academic and social development, self-esteem, and personal feelings of efficacy
- be inextricably linked to poverty, and both are risk factors for high levels of emotional distress
- intersect with gender in ways that result in different experiences of inequality by men, women, girls and boys.

Impact of racism on social and community wellbeing

Well-documented in the national and international literature is the evidence that racism and discrimination disrupt all dimensions of social cohesion (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013). Racism not only has harmful effects on individual victims of racism, but for a society as a whole, as it more generally undermines the community's expectations that they can count on having their own human rights respected. As Allbrook (2001) noted, racism is "socially destructive, destabilises good community relations, social cohesion, and national unity... and decreases productivity" (p. 12, cited in Pedersen et al, 2003).

Furthermore, some research finds that racist speech not only negatively impacts on the victim but that bystanders to such racism are also negatively affected (Chrobot-Mason, Ragins, & Linnehan, 2013). There is evidence, also, which suggests that that ostracising others can lead to decreased views of one's own humanity (Bastian et al., 2008).

The American Psychological Association's (2001) resolution on racism identified the following negative impacts of racism on dominant as well as minority or 'target' groups:

- Racism negatively affects the cognitive and affective development of members of the dominant group by perpetuating distorted thinking about the self and members of marginalised or oppressed groups
- Racism can promote anxiety and fear in the dominant group members whenever they are in the presence of, or anticipating the

presence of, marginalised group members, often leading to acts of hostility and aggression toward ethnic minority individuals

- Both active racism and passive acceptance of race-based privilege disrupt the mental health of both perpetrators and victims of racial injustice.

Recommendation 6: There is compelling evidence of a link between ethnic and race-based discrimination and poor mental health and wellbeing. It is recommended that any focus on racism goes beyond physical threat alone and include acts of intimidation and vilification, and that social and community impacts are assessed, along with individual harm.

(e) the impact of political leadership and media representation on the prevalence of vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief

The APS believes political leaders and the media industry have a significant impact on the prevalence of vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry. For this reason the APS supports strong protections against racial vilification and discrimination, and we were explicit about not supporting the proposed amendments to sections 18C and 18D of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) 1975 in recent Government inquiries. This position has been documented in the following submissions:

- APS Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia– December 2016
- APS Submission to the Attorney-General's Department on Amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 - April 2014

These submissions emphasised the demonstrable links between racism in all its manifestations and the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and drew on evidence indicating that weakening race discrimination laws could send the message to the community that racist speech is acceptable, and thus risks increasing racist behaviour and attitudes.

Condoning racist behaviour leads to more racism

Seeing and hearing other people's behaviour and speech in public can have a powerful influence on one's own behaviour and attitudes. In relation to racism, both positive and negative messages have been shown to have an impact:

- Hearing others express racism has been shown to make one's own antiracist positions less strong. Conversely, hearing someone condemn racism strengthens antiracist opinions (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994).
- Exposure to racism leads to changes in children's attitudes. Particularly in the adolescent period, the social context has a large influence on attitudes, potentially larger than family influences.
- In line with the group norm theory of attitudes, racist 'confederates' in experimental studies affect participants' expression of racism, as well as reactions to others' racism (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002).
- There is evidence that individuals who hold racist views are more likely to feel that others agree with their views (the consensus effect) (Pedersen, Griffiths, & Watt, 2008). Relatedly, other research finds that when people believe that their views are consensually shared, they are more likely to speak out (Miller, 1993).

The role of the media

The media have a powerful influence on public attitudes and perceptions and as such have an important social responsibility in relation to the messages they convey about race and ethnicity. The following evidence indicates why there need to be regulations around freedom of speech in the media:

- The prolific work of van Dijk highlights the role of the media, and specifically discourse and the words used, in not only perpetuating racism but creating new forms of racism (e.g. Van Dijk, 2000).
- There is also evidence to suggest that prejudice relates to the acceptance of false beliefs as accurate, and that false beliefs relate to negative political rhetoric (Pedersen, Watt & Hansen, 2006; Suhnan, Pedersen & Hartley, 2012). Thus, the words and actions of political leaders, public figures and prominent media personalities can be expected to affect community attitudes.
- Positive representations of minority groups in the media have been shown to lead to more positive attitudes of viewers, and conversely, it is likely that misrepresentation will lead to prejudice and stereotyping

Mainstream media are privileged at the expense of ethnic minorities whose voices are rarely heard and who are at greater risk of being silenced than those of dominant groups with ready access to public space (e.g., columnists, bloggers, politicians) (APS Media Representations and Responsibilities, 2013). On this basis, the APS (2013) has recommended that media producers and the media industry accept responsibility in news coverage, current affairs and other portrayals of ethnic minorities to:

- encourage a shift in emphasis from simplistic ideas of 'newsworthiness' (focusing on speed, visual appeal, simplicity, etc.) to a commitment to increased coverage of social contextual factors so that viewers can more accurately 'make sense' of news stories;
- ensure that portrayals of ethnic and cultural groups reflect their diversity and strengths, and avoid stereotyped or demeaning depictions;
- study examples of the use of the media to elicit positive changes in social attitudes and use these as guides for their own future programming and development (APS, Media Representations and Responsibilities, 2013).

Social norms and public leadership

Psychological research shows that what is sanctioned as normal and acceptable in society greatly affects people's behaviour. If the problematic nature of racism is minimised, it is likely to lead to higher incidence and prevalence of racism. Evidence that social norms play a powerful role in internalising motivations to control prejudiced thoughts strengthens the case for governments to establish and promote anti-racist norms (Blinder, Ford & Ivarsflaten, 2013). Furthermore, people who identify with leaders are likely to adopt their norms, so if national leadership puts forward a viewpoint it can be expected to have an impact on citizens. This highlights the social responsibility of government to take account of the broader impact of any statements or changes to policy.

Strong policy against racial discrimination indicates to Australians that racism is a problem which requires action, inspiring and encouraging the public to take a stance. People are most likely to act against racism if they are confident of support from their peers and organisations (e.g. policies that address racism) (Russell, Pennay, Webster, & Paradies, 2013). Furthermore, the large majority of Victorians believe that racist insults are not acceptable in social situations and that more should be done to address race-based discrimination in Australia (Russell et al, 2013). Undermining community attitudes that work against racism could potentially dismantle the trust the community has in their leaders to make decisions that represent their aspirations and best interests.

Recommendation 7: In light of their powerful influence on public attitudes and perceptions, the APS recommends that Government and the media provide strong leadership by promoting positive representations of minority groups in the messages they convey about race and ethnicity.

(f) how to improve the expected standards of public discourse about matters of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief

As stated in the previous response to ToR (e), sections 18C and 18D of the RDA have an important role in maintaining the expected standards of public discourse. Recent attempts to dilute the definition of racial hatred in the RDA have the potential to not only negatively impact upon individuals who may be victims of racism, but on social and community understandings of racism as a concept, thereby shifting the standards of what is considered acceptable.

The APS Position Paper *Psychological perspectives on racism and prejudice* (1997) acknowledged that concerns about political correctness can result in important but difficult questions (such as 'race') being avoided and under-researched. On the other hand, the Position Paper noted that dismissing genuine and effective anti-racism initiatives as 'merely' or 'cynically' politically correct can legitimate racial intolerance by appealing to concerns about 'freedom of speech'. Subsequent research has found a relationship between racist attitudes and opposition to perceived 'political correctness'. Thus if leaders espouse unlimited free speech ahead of restraint and sensitivity to its likely impact on others, racist attitudes are likely to be validated and acted upon (Khan & Pederson, 2010; Pederson et al., 2000).

While the APS appreciates that the recent RDA Inquiry was primarily focused on the right to freedom of speech, we were concerned that unconditional affirmation of this right could come at the expense of the equally important right to freedom from discrimination. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right but it is not an absolute right. It must be balanced against other rights including the right to live free from racial discrimination and vilification. It is thus arguable that the ability to speak freely and safely is more tenuous for minority group members than for majority group members

The APS acknowledges that laws are only the starting point for the full realisation and protection of human rights such as freedom from racism and discrimination, along with freedom of speech. But by setting standards of conduct, the existing laws constrain the spread of racism and racial hatred and at the same time encourage people to speak out against racism, complementing broader education strategies. One such community education strategy, which is supported by the APS, is the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) campaign, *Racism: It stops with me*. Further, it has been suggested that if Australia is genuinely committed to a version of multiculturalism that encourages meaningful social integration while

discouraging racism and bigotry from any source, it may be time for an Australian Federal Multicultural Act.

Recommendation 8: The APS recommends that the Australian Government consider the introduction of a comprehensive bill of rights and/or a Federal Multicultural Act as part of the strategy to strengthen multiculturalism and address racism and discrimination.

Using social norms to raise standards

As identified in our response to ToR(e), an important way to raise expected standards of public discourse is by using social norms to portray tolerant behaviour as widely accepted. Psychological research shows that racist attitudes and behaviours are learned, and so it is possible to combat racism by role modeling tolerance and positively influencing the people around us (APA, 2001). Social norms are rules about how people in society should behave. Emphasising that tolerant behaviour is expected, appropriate and morally right is more likely to be effective than emphasising the scale of the problem. Some specific and evidence-based strategies to promote social norms include:

- sharing examples of how much tolerant behaviour exists all around us
- talking positively about friendships with people from different cultural groups
- using status to spread the message
- creating positive social norms

Recommendation 9: The APS supports the retention of strong protections against racial vilification and discrimination, including the preservation of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) 1975 in its current form.

Recommendation 10: Community education strategies, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) campaign, 'Racism: It stops with me', should be continually supported as ways to improve the expected standards of public discourse around racism and discrimination.

Recommendation 11: It is recommended that social norms are used to portray tolerant behaviour as a way of raising community standards.

(g) how to better recognise and value the contribution that diverse communities bring to Australian social and community life

The importance of good resettlement to valuing migrants and refugees

Better recognising and valuing the contribution of diverse communities includes providing adequate and ongoing settlement support to migrants and refugees upon arrival in Australia, including income support, access to health care, employment assistance, access to interpreters, housing, education and legal assistance.

Meeting Australia's obligations under the UN refugee convention and upholding the fundamental right of refugees to seek protection, by adopting a fair refugee status determination process is an important first step of recognition.

Recognising the potential contribution that refugee communities can make to Australian community life should also include recognising and celebrating the inherent strengths of refugees. This can be achieved by working collaboratively with refugee communities to build strong community support networks that assist in the settlement process, including recovery from trauma (WCC, 2008).

Valuing family units and networks by adopting policies that prioritise the migration of family units and enhance reunion of migrant and refugee families is an important form of valuing migrants (APS, 2008). This recognises the extended nature and cultural ties among many refugee communities.

Recommendation 12: The APS believes that valuing refugee and migrant communities begins with a strong resettlement program. Strengthening support provided upon arrival, ensuring a fair refugee determination process, building strong community support networks and enhancing family reunion policies is recommended.

Strengthening citizenship as a form of recognition

Recognising the contributions of migrants and refugees begins with ensuring their rights are upheld. Human rights promote human happiness and wellbeing because they protect people's vital needs and fundamental interests. The protection of these basic rights further enables people to

pursue those things they find enjoyable and worthwhile, and enables their contributions to be valuable and recognised.

Strengthening the citizenship program as a key form of recognition for migrants is fundamental. All residents should have equal access to citizenship, which provides the right to vote and sense of security, as well as affording a sense of belonging and reciprocal commitment and responsibility.

Recommendation 13: The APS recommends strengthening the citizenship program, to ensure all residents have access to citizenship, as a key form of recognition for migrants and refugees.

Valuing the voluntary and leadership contribution of migrants and refugees

Migrants and refugees make huge contributions to their communities and the broader Australian community via volunteering. This is both formal and informal, and contributes to community strengthening, service provision and towards to the national productivity.

Better promotion of this form of contribution and recognition – both through programs which support this form of participation and through awards and ceremonies, and through campaigns which promote diversity in volunteering are important.

There is however, an underrepresentation of cultural diversity in positions of leadership, as well as in the media. Further focus on promoting leadership opportunities (such as ambassadors for multiculturalism and social cohesion) need to be explored. Improving the representation of cultural diversity in leadership and in the media would strengthen Australia's multiculturalism.

Recommendation 14: The APS recommends better valuing the voluntary contributions of migrants and refugees and a stronger commitment to promoting cultural diversity in leadership and in the media.

Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity within the broader community

As identified above, an inclusive, multicultural society is dependent upon the attitudes, behaviours and actions of the receiving community, as well as the settlement process of migrants and refugees. An effective multicultural policy needs to acknowledge and address ways in which individuals and communities in mainstream Australian society can effectively facilitate the involvement and settlement of new migrants and refugees.

There is a body of research in psychology which focuses on acculturation, a process which acknowledges the mutual changes that occur when groups and individuals from different cultures (e.g., refugees and mainstream communities) come into continuous contact with one another (Dinh & Bond, 2008).

This research has demonstrated that communities are enriched and transformed by migrants and refugees and the skills, perspectives and traditions they bring, and that more intercultural contact among different ethnic groups can facilitate a more positive context for inter-ethnic relationships, understanding, collaboration and unity, which is a mutual win-win situation for individuals, communities and society.

It is important to encourage a community's interest in what refugees and migrants have to offer, via a non-competitive approach (emphasising contributions to an area rather than competition for jobs/houses), and recognise that receiving and migrant communities negotiate their relationships from different power positions.

Specifically, valuing the diverse linguistic and cultural environment by supporting language maintenance and introducing native English speakers to the transformative power associated with learning another language is important.

Celebrating and promoting dates of cultural and/or religious significance to communities and encouraging other Australians to participate is also essential.

Recommendation 15: Non-migrants should be encouraged to see the benefits of a diverse society and supported in their responsibility to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment to newly arrived communities. Mechanisms which enable mainstream (receiving) individuals and communities to learn and benefit from the experiences of new communities should be explored, as these enhance the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians.

(j). Any related matters.

Addressing fear about violence and terror

Matters relating to national security, violent extremism, radicalisation and social disunity have become entangled with instances of visible racism in the community.

Fears about violence and terror in particular pose a significant threat to social inclusion and multiculturalism, notwithstanding our relatively low level of threat of terrorism in Australia. It is important to assist people to address their fears and importantly change their behaviours so as to promote rather than further threaten social cohesion. These strategies serve to increase people's sense of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy – which in turn build social cohesion.

Current approaches to countering violent extremism and radicalisation based on surveillance and policing often overlook Australia's existing strong social cohesion, and risk undermining our multicultural ethos and national identity.

There is little evidence to support the effectiveness of such approaches, often presented as 'quick fix' solutions to perceived community problems that are seen as urgent. A key theme of research in this area is that strengths-focused approaches should be prioritised ahead of punitive or coercive measures. This should include:

- Promoting community engagement and community-led interventions
- Promoting partnerships and collaboration with at-risk groups
- Encouraging listening and trust
- Creating opportunities for respectful discussion and exchange of views
- Creating social spaces for intercultural interaction
- Learning about and apply conflict resolution skills
- Promoting cultural competence and share cultural experiences

Recommendation 16: Assisting people to address their fears about violence and terror can result in important behavioral change so as to promote rather than further threaten social cohesion.

National productive capacity

While extensive comment on the role of migration in the national productive capacity is beyond the scope of APS expertise, we draw the committee's attention to research conducted by Ben-Moshe et al (2005) highlighting the role that diversity can play in economic capacity building. In brief, this research suggests that building community capacity in regional areas will lead to greater community harmony, which in turn leads to greater economic success, thus making it more likely to attract and retain immigrants in regional communities. This study confirmed that immigration, if properly managed, can provide a stimulus to the local economy. The study found that harmonious communities were more likely to be entrepreneurial. These communities tended to create local initiatives to address social problems as well as initiatives of a socio-economic nature. The dividends of building community capacity in regional areas are clearly fed back to the community as economic returns such as investment, consumption, volunteerism, knowledge transfer, cultural enrichment, and building social capital.

If the integration of immigrants is poorly handled, however, the results may result in social exclusion of certain groups leading to a host of social problems which impact upon economic growth and development. Isolation of culturally diverse groups, within a community setting in particular, restricts the economic and social benefits of immigration and can, in turn, generate anti-social behaviour that compounds the problems of both the immigrant group and the community at large. Social exclusion contributes to diminished community leadership, limiting bridging social capital which is a key component of optimal economic outcomes.

The research found that supporting multiculturalism and community capacity building in diverse communities therefore avoids the costs of social exclusion: such as the non-use and under utilisation of labour, welfare dependency, limited education and skills training, extra policing, non-investment, and leakage (i.e. people going elsewhere to access services).

Recommendation 17: Australia's multicultural policy should highlight the role that diversity can play in economic capacity building, identifying economic returns such as investment, consumption, volunteerism, knowledge transfer, cultural enrichment and social capital.

Summary of recommendations:

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) recommends that:

Recommendation 1: The national multicultural agenda promotes an overarching vision for a diverse Australia which is inclusive, dynamic and wide-reaching in its notion of 'multiculturalism' and makes explicit links to the benefits of diversity for the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

Recommendation 2: There should be an acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians as the first custodians of the land, and recognition of the role Indigenous Australians continue to play in contemporary multicultural society

Recommendation 3: Existing policies and their assumptions about cultural relations should be examined for their impact on social inclusion and cohesion.

ToR (a) the views and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities

Recommendation 4: The views, voices and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically (CALD) backgrounds are essential to prioritise in any discussion around multiculturalism.

Recommendation 5: Experiences of racism and attitudes of prejudice in Australia should be continually monitored, along with community attitudes of support for multiculturalism.

ToR (d) the impact of discrimination, vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief

Recommendation 6: There is compelling evidence of a link between ethnic and race-based discrimination and poor mental health and wellbeing. It is recommended that any focus on racism goes beyond physical threat alone and include acts of intimidation and vilification, and that social and community impacts are assessed, along with individual harm.

ToR (e) the impact of political leadership and media representation on the prevalence of vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief

Recommendation 7: In light of their powerful influence on public attitudes and perceptions, the APS recommends that Government and the media provide strong leadership by promoting positive representations of minority groups in the messages they convey about race and ethnicity.

ToR(f) how to improve the expected standards of public discourse about matters of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief

Recommendation 8: The APS recommends that the Australian Government consider the introduction of a comprehensive bill of rights and/or a Federal Multicultural Act as part of the strategy to strengthen multiculturalism and address racism and discrimination.

Recommendation 9: The APS supports the retention of strong protections against racial vilification and discrimination, including the preservation of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) 1975 in its current form.

Recommendation 10: Community education strategies, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) campaign, 'Racism: It stops with me', should be continually supported as ways to improve the expected standards of public discourse around racism and discrimination.

Recommendation 11: It is recommended that social norms are used to portray tolerant behaviour as a way of raising community standards.

ToR (g) how to better recognise and value the contribution that diverse communities bring to Australian social and community life

Recommendation 12: The APS believes that valuing refugee and migrant communities begins with a strong resettlement program. Strengthening support provided upon arrival, ensuring a fair refugee determination process, building strong community support networks and enhancing family reunion policies is recommended.

References

Recommendation 13: The APS recommends strengthening the citizenship program, to ensure all residents have access to citizenship, as a key form of recognition for migrants and refugees.

Recommendation 14: The APS recommends better valuing the voluntary contributions of migrants and refugees and a stronger commitment to promoting cultural diversity in leadership and in the media.

Recommendation 15: Non-migrants should be encouraged to see the benefits of a diverse society and supported in their responsibility to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment to newly arrived communities. Mechanisms which enable mainstream (receiving) individuals and communities to learn and benefit from the experiences of new communities should be explored, as these enhance the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians.

ToR (j). Any related matters.

Recommendation 16: Assisting people to address their fears about violence and terror can result in important behavioral change so as to promote rather than further threaten social cohesion.

Recommendation 17: Australia's multicultural policy should highlight the role that diversity can play in economic capacity building, identifying economic returns such as investment, consumption, volunteerism, knowledge transfer, cultural enrichment and social capital.

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About the Australian Psychological Society

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the national professional organisation for psychologists with more than 22,000 members across Australia. Psychologists are experts in human behaviour and bring experience in understanding crucial components necessary to support people to optimise their function in the community.

A key goal of the APS is to actively contribute psychological knowledge for the promotion and enhancement of community wellbeing. Psychology in the Public Interest is the section of the APS dedicated to the communication and application of psychological knowledge to enhance community wellbeing and promote equitable and just treatment of all segments of society.

Psychologists regard people as intrinsically valuable and respect their rights, including the right to autonomy and justice. Psychologists engage in conduct which promotes equity and the protection of people's human rights, legal rights, and moral rights (APS, 2007). The APS continues to raise concerns and contribute to debates around human rights, including the rights of clients receiving psychological services, and of marginalised groups in society (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, asylum seekers and refugees and LGBTI individuals and groups)

(<http://www.psychology.org.au/community/public-interest/human-rights/>).

Underpinning this contribution is the strong evidence linking human rights, material circumstances and psychological health.

Relevant APS Publications and Resources

The APS unequivocally denounces racism in all its forms for its negative psychological, social, educational and economic effects on human development throughout the life span. The engagement of the APS with issues of race is not merely a political judgement, but a matter which touches on the core of our profession.

The APS is committed to eliminating racism in all its forms, reflecting its core ethical principle of respect for the dignity of all persons.

The APS has developed a number of position papers and resources on matters relating to multiculturalism and social cohesion, and has several member groups interested in the topic. These include:

Social cohesion

- [Building social cohesion in a multicultural society – 5 insights from psychology](#) (2016)
- [Social Cohesion Roundtable](#) (May, 2016)

Racism

- [Racism and prejudice](#) – Review Paper (1997)

- [Moving beyond racism](#)– Information Sheet
- [APS Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia](#)(2016)
- [Submission to the Attorney-General's Department on Amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975](#) (2014)
- [Submission to the National Anti-racism Strategy Public Consultation](#) (2012)
- [National roundtable on research on racism towards Indigenous Australians](#) (2009)
- A cover feature in the August 2013 edition of *InPsych* (the bulletin of the APS) comprising the following articles:
 - [Psychological perspectives on racism](#) Professor Martha Augoustinos
 - [Effective anti-racism strategies and conversations: Lessons from the literature](#) Associate Professor Winnifred Louis, Dr Fiona Kate Barlow, Dr Katharine Greenaway and Stephen La Macchia
 - [Promoting resiliency to counter racism: The lived wisdom within Aboriginal voices](#) Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, Katrina Newey, Virginia O'Rourke and Professor Rhonda Craven
 - [Creating a new wave of action against racism: VicHealth's work with bystanders](#) Dr Peter Streker
 - [APS contributions to combating racism](#)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- [Psychological wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia](#) – Position Statement (2011)
- [Psychological wellbeing of refugees resettling in Australia](#) – Review Paper (2008)
- Thirteen submissions in the last 15 years (See [Refugee and Asylum Seeker Webpage](#))

Violence

- [Communicating about peace, violence and social justice](#) – Information Sheet
- [Parent guide to helping children manage conflict, aggression, bullying](#) - Information Sheet
- [Talking with children about violence and injustice](#) – Information Sheet

Media Representations and Responsibilities

- [Media representations and responsibilities](#) – Review Paper (revised 2013)

The following fact sheets (2000) are extracted from the original Media Representations and Responsibilities Position Paper:

- [Representation of ethnic groups in the media](#)
- [Media portrayals of crime](#)
- [The effects of violent media on children](#)

- Guidelines for helping children deal with frightening events and media coverage – Information Sheet

Indigenous

- Establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Psychology Interest Group, and supporting the establishment of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association - <http://www.Indigenouspsychology.com.au>, and
- Development of the APS Reconciliation Action Plan - www.psychology.org.au/reconciliation
- A formal apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, acknowledging psychology's role in contributing to the erosion of culture and to their mistreatment - http://www.psychology.org.au/news/media_releases/15September2016/

APS Interest Groups related to Social Cohesion in a Multicultural Society

- Psychologists for Peace
- Psychology and Cultures
- Psychology from an Islamic Perspective
- Refugee Issues and Psychology
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Psychology