



Media Release

SCoA CONCERNED: EFFECTIVE SETTLEMENT IS ONLY REALLY POSSIBLE IN A COUNTRY THAT VALUES MULTICULTURALISM

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA), the peak agency representing settlement services for humanitarian entrants, today joins calls by the sector to “reclaim multiculturalism”.

SCoA Chair, Cedric Manen, expressed his concern that after three years of Labor Government we are still waiting for a renewal of multiculturalism, a vital social policy that languished in the years prior to 2007.

“Multiculturalism is not about ghettos or privileges, it is about values of social inclusion, social justice and social connectedness” said Mr Manen.

SCoA believes that Australia is part of a world community joined together by globalisation, instant communications, a finite and vulnerable physical environment, and our shared humanity.

Our society is visible to the rest of the world. If Australians treat each other with dignity, respect, and uphold our individual and collective rights, this will not only benefit members of our communities, but others: directly, indirectly, here and abroad.

Multiculturalism promotes a civic culture that nurtures, and is in turn nurtured by, diversity. Whether this is reflected in Indigenous culture – the oldest continuous culture in the world – or in our newest members such as humanitarian entrants, multiculturalism and its related principles of rights and responsibilities reflect values of importance to all Australians.

Multiculturalism helps maintain a social, economic, civil, political and cultural environment that is necessary if Australia’s newest communities are to thrive, to contribute, and to live a life free from discrimination and exclusion. It supports governments’ goals to build a more socially inclusive Australia and it affirms we are still a progressive, cosmopolitan, civil society. This will make Australia a wealthier, safer, and more respected member of the world community.

Mr Manen argues that multiculturalism is the policy that will support the human rights of all Australians of diverse cultural, ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds to freely express their identity without prejudice, racism or persecution. He said “We have neglected these values for too long. Communities, as groups and as individuals, are paying a price for this neglect. Is this a price they, and Australia, should pay?”

For these reasons SCoA puts its support behind FECCA’s call to reclaim multiculturalism.

A revived and active multiculturalism for a 21st century Australia is needed now, it is needed urgently, and it needs to be comprehensively promoted and resourced!

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