



# MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

*United, Strong, Successful*

— Australia's multicultural statement —



Australian Government







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## Foreword

### Prime Minister of Australia



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**THE HON MALCOLM TURNBULL MP**  
Prime Minister of Australia

Australia is the most successful multicultural society in the world.

We are as old as our First Australians, the oldest continuing human culture on earth, who have cared for this country for more than 50,000 years.

And we are as young as the baby in the arms of her migrant mother who could have come from any nation, any faith, any race in the world.

Australia is an immigration nation. Almost half of our current population was either born overseas or has at least one parent born overseas.

And we come from every culture, every race, every faith, every nation.

We are defined not by race, religion or culture, but by shared values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and equality of opportunity—a “fair go”.

The glue that holds us together is mutual respect – a deep recognition that each of us is entitled to the same respect, the same dignity, the same opportunities.

And national security – a resolute determination to defend our nation, our people and our values – is the foundation on which our freedoms have been built and maintained.

At a time of growing global tensions and rising uncertainty, Australia remains a steadfast example of a harmonious, egalitarian and enterprising nation, embracing its diversity.

*Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* renews and reaffirms the Government’s commitment to a multicultural Australia, in which racism and discrimination have no place.

I commend *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* to all Australians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Malcolm Turnbull'.

**THE HON MALCOLM TURNBULL MP**  
Prime Minister of Australia

## Joint message from the Minister for Social Services and the Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs



**THE HON CHRISTIAN PORTER MP**  
Minister for Social Services

All Australians can be proud of our strong and successful multicultural society. The story of Australia began in the distant past with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, grew with the establishment of British institutions, and continues with people from lands far and wide.

The freedom and security we enjoy is no accident. Successive Governments have set out a vision for our society that embraces diversity while emphasising our unique national identity and the importance of being an integrated and united people.

In an age where many people have grown anxious about the increase of terrorism and extremism, there is no better time to reaffirm our steadfast commitment to democracy, opportunity, and our shared values.

The Australian Government is committed to the security of our nation and the freedom of our people. In *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* the Government sets out the values that have driven our success in the past and will help us thrive in the future.

This statement recognises that cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths; one that equips us to build a future where everyone belongs and has the chance to live a great life. It upholds the centrality of our democratic institutions and the rule of law, it highlights the importance of citizenship in our national identity, and it makes clear the responsibility we all have to respect our fellow Australians.

This statement is the foundation on which we can further build our multicultural society and we look forward to working with all Australians in the tireless pursuit of freedom and prosperity.



**THE HON CHRISTIAN PORTER MP**  
Minister for Social Services



**SENATOR THE HON ZED SEELJA**  
Assistant Minister for Social Services and  
Multicultural Affairs



**SENATOR THE HON ZED SEELJA**  
Assistant Minister for Social Services  
and Multicultural Affairs









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## LYNN'S STORY

When Lynn Yeh's parents brought her to Australia from Taiwan at the age of 19, they were seeking a better education and better future for her. Now a successful businesswoman, Lynn is giving these opportunities back to others.

"Before we came here my parents told us, 'Once you go to Australia, you must work hard and never ever turn back'. So, we try our best and never ever give up.

I set up my own pharmaceutical company. Now after 25 years, we have more than 100 employees and we export to many overseas countries.

We value our staff and commit to giving back to the community. It's a meaningful and joyful thing to help others.

We definitely can bring our own country's culture to Australia and contribute back to Australian society.

We join with you as one country, together."

Lynn is one of many proud migrants whose economic contribution creates new job opportunities for Australians. As a result of what Australia has offered, Lynn is now driving community contributions, offering employment for people from all cultures and supporting services such as Foodbank and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

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*"I set up my own pharmaceutical company. Now after 25 years, we have more than 100 employees and we export to many overseas countries."*

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# Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful

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## Our shared story

Australia is the most successful multicultural society in the world, uniting a multitude of cultures, experiences, beliefs, and traditions. We owe our accomplishments as a nation to the contributions of more than 300 different ancestries—from the First Australians to the newest arrivals.

We have flourished in part thanks to our cultural diversity that is underpinned by our common values and commitment to freedom, security, and prosperity.

Our nation is enriched by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the oldest surviving culture on the planet, and the millions of people who have chosen to make a new life here.

For more than 50,000 years First Australians have lived, learned, adapted and survived on the lands we now call Australia. Living side by side, they consisted of over 250 different language groups or ‘nations’ across the continent, each with distinctive cultures, beliefs, and dialects. Descendants of these nations represent the oldest surviving culture on the planet and have stories of times and places beyond the memory of any other people.

The story continued with the foundation of modern Australia, through British and Irish settlement and the establishment of our parliamentary democracy, institutions and law. Over time, our story grew to include the millions of people from all continents who have made Australia home.

Today, Australians welcome those who have migrated here to be part of our free and open society, to build their lives and make a contribution to our nation.

Over time, this coming together of many peoples helped build our infrastructure, enlivened our communities, enhanced our cultural experiences, increased our opportunities and, most significantly, expanded the way we see and engage with the world.

Building mutual obligations between government, the community, and the individual – regardless of nationality – strengthens our resilience and sense of belonging.

Together we have built the modern and prosperous Australia we are today, with our shared values, rights and responsibilities.



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## PETER'S STORY

One of seven children, Peter Scanlon is a 2nd generation Australian and successful businessman. Peter credits embracing cultural diversity as one of his key secrets to commercial success.

“My grandparents migrated from Ireland in the 1880s.

Growing up in Australia post-war, I watched many migrants arrive and settle. I was staggered by the courage these ‘new Australians’ had, and the way they took the chance to provide a better life for their kids. That’s something that’s never left me.

I started the Scanlon Foundation to help build social cohesion in Australia – not just because I know how important cultural diversity is to business, but also because of my own personal experience.

Our growth as a country is driven by immigration. It is essential that we help settle new migrants well so they can contribute and participate as soon as possible.

There is a lack of understanding of how much diversity within the workplace can improve your business. When a business is able to communicate to customers and suppliers in their first language, and with an understanding of their cultures, it can lead to much better outcomes.

The Scanlon Foundation helps the business community to recognise and celebrate their cultural diversity through initiatives such as the Taste of Harmony campaign run every March.”

Peter believes supporting new migrants is important for both our economic prosperity as a nation and in maintaining the cohesive social fabric of our communities. Working with the Australian Government, the Scanlon Foundation assists new migrants as they settle in Australia through 70 community hubs embedded within primary schools.

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## Shared values

Our values unite us and create social bonds between us. They provide the foundation for our society and a shared future in which everyone belongs. Our values are based on:

### **RESPECT**

We respect and we are committed to the rule of law and allegiance to Australia.

We have respect for the liberty and dignity of all individuals.

We value our diversity and embrace mutual respect, inclusion, fairness and compassion.

### **EQUALITY**

We support equality of men and women.

We believe in equality before the law.

We believe in equality of opportunity for all.

### **FREEDOM**

Our commitment to freedom is fundamental.

We support freedom of thought, speech, religion, enterprise and association.

We are committed to a parliamentary democracy.

We take responsibility for fulfilling our civic duties.

Practices and behaviours that undermine our values have no place in Australia.

We all benefit from our nation's economic success, cultural and religious freedom and diversity. Maintaining a strong commitment to our common values is in the best interests of the Australian people.

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## Shared rights and responsibilities

We recognise the importance of mutual respect and mutual responsibility. Our success as a multicultural society is due to a balance of rights and responsibilities that ensure a stable, resilient and harmonious society where we seek to give everyone the opportunity to contribute to—and benefit from—our prosperity.

Ours is a society founded on a liberal-democratic tradition in which the fundamental rights of every individual are inviolable.

Citizenship is a privilege and, as part of the Australian Citizenship Ceremony, new citizens pledge and affirm *'loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey'*.

Australians rightly expect that everyone who is in our country, whether or not they are Australian citizens, obeys Australian laws, supports our democratic process, and treats all people with respect and dignity.



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## MARIJA'S STORY

Now a political reporter for SBS News in Canberra, Marija Jovanovic arrived in Australia as a six month old baby from Serbia. Her parents believed life in Australia would give Marija access to a great education and opportunities she may otherwise not have had.

“I’m so, so lucky. If I had not come here, I could have lived through things that children should never have had to live through, like war. I can’t believe what I have been given here.

As I grew up, the number one thing my parents taught me was to work hard and to never give up.

I’m one of millions of 2nd generation Australians who are working and living in a country that they love and that they want to give back to in every way they can.

The value of a multicultural society is so important because it’s the only way that the society can function peacefully, and in a way that offers opportunity for everyone in an equal fashion.

Respect, acceptance, inclusiveness and shared responsibility are vital to making Australia the best multicultural society it can be.

I’m a very proud Australian-Serbian woman and I just wish every other Australian would meet as many people as they can from different backgrounds, because it makes for an incredible country.”

Migrants, like Marija and her family, bring cultural connections and contribute greatly to our society. In turn, they join with all Australians who benefit from our nation’s economic success, cultural and religious freedom, and diversity.

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*“As I grew up, the number one thing my parents taught me was to work hard and to never give up.”*

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## A safe and secure Australia

Underpinning a diverse and harmonious Australia is the security of our nation. The Australian Government places the highest priority on the safety and security of all Australians. Recent terrorist attacks around the world have justifiably caused concern in the Australian community.

The Government responds to these threats by continuing to invest in counter-terrorism, strong borders and strong national security. This helps to ensure that Australia remains an open, inclusive, free and safe society.

In the face of these threats, however, we do not compromise on our shared values and national unity. The Government affirms that we best reinforce the safety of the Australian community by focusing on what unites us and addressing our differences through mutual respect.

## Shared vision for the future

Australia is united by a shared commitment to our nation and our democratic institutions and values. We are all encouraged to promote acceptance and understanding, and ensure our society continues to be safe, cohesive and harmonious.

In this statement, the Government continues promoting the principle of mutual respect and denouncing racial hatred and discrimination as incompatible with Australian society.

It complements other Government policies and programs that, together with numerous community and volunteer activities, inspire, support and sustain our unity. For example:

- The Adult Migrant English Program supports eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to learn foundation English language and settlement skills to enable them to participate socially and economically in Australian society.
- The Government's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy ensures programs and services meet the needs of all Australians, whatever their cultural and linguistic background.

- Pathways to citizenship give new migrants the opportunity to be full and active participants in civic society.
- The Government supports a strong and diverse multicultural media through radio, print, online and television.
- Harmony Day was established in 1999 and is now celebrated by thousands of Australians each year, spreading a message of inclusiveness, respect and belonging for everyone.
- The Australian Multicultural Council acts as a key advisory body, providing robust and independent advice to Government.

Australians do not take our harmony and prosperity for granted. Together—as individuals, groups, and at all levels of government—we will continue to build stronger, more cohesive and prosperous communities, guided by our shared values and the following strategic directions.



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## TIM'S STORY

Tim Omaji, popularly known as 'Timomatic', is a Nigerian-born Australian singer-songwriter and dancer, rising to fame as a contestant on *So You Think You Can Dance (Australia)* in 2009. Tim's academic father brought his family to Australia when Tim was only 10 months old. Nonetheless, Tim and his three siblings weren't deprived of West Africa's vibrant culture.

"We moved to Australia because Dad and Mum wanted to raise me and my brothers and sisters in an environment that offered more professional and academic opportunities. Dad stressed the importance of education, and application, as a means of self-empowerment.

I was usually the only black kid at school. I looked very different to everyone. It was just tough to fit in and to find my place. But, at the same time, my parents would always be like, look, you're destined to be different and unique, just stand on your own two feet – be confident in that.

When I was nine, I formed a band with my family. During the intermission of our shows, I would go on stage mimicking Michael Jackson's singing and dancing skills. I was nicknamed 'Timomatic' by my friends when I was 15, because of my hip-hop dancing skills. I started working as artistic director and choreographer of dance company Kulture Break in Canberra.

After school I spent six months at University of Canberra before my passion for music and performance just grew too strong and I couldn't deny it.

Growing up in Australia gave me a real sense of cultural diversity which really influenced my career path. I wanted to do something that could speak and relate to any and every culture. Dancing and singing gave me this unique opportunity. Through the platform of entertainment, I have been able to inspire, motivate and educate people from all races and religions."

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## Encouraging economic and social participation of new arrivals

Australia has a rich history of migrants contributing to our social and economic fabric. This continues today with our inclusive multicultural society providing opportunities for new migrants to contribute to the success of our nation.

Together, the efforts of communities, schools, non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations, employers and governments are providing opportunities for people to positively contribute to Australian society.

People who migrate to Australia share the search for new opportunities or a better life.

At the same time, economic and social integration by new migrants and their families is vital to their future. Feeling connected to their new home and being a part of Australian society creates a sense of worth and belonging.

The Government provides a settlement framework, widely considered best practice, designed to help new migrants integrate into Australian life. Settlement programs support migrants to become self-reliant and active members of the Australian community.

Some new arrivals, particularly through Australia's refugee and humanitarian program, benefit from specialised support. This includes help learning English and gaining necessary education or employment skills. The Government remains committed to helping humanitarian entrants, especially during the first five years after arriving in Australia, so they can build a better life and become self-sufficient, fully contributing members of society. The Australian Government is currently reforming settlement services to deliver improved English language, education and employment outcomes for humanitarian entrants.

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## Harnessing the advantages of our diversity and shared national interest

English is and will remain our national language and is a critical tool for migrant integration. At the same time, our multilingual workforce is broadening business horizons and boosting Australia's competitive edge in an increasingly globalised economy.

Our cultural diversity is one of our greatest assets – it sparks innovation, creativity and vitality. Our economy is strengthened by the skills, knowledge, linguistic capabilities, networks and creativity of our diverse workforce. Our productivity and competitiveness are enhanced through our ability to recognise and seize opportunities for international economic engagement.

This includes the talent of the many temporary migrants who contribute to the Australian economy and society while they are here. Many settle permanently in Australia, while others return to their home country or move to another country, further strengthening our cultural, trade and economic opportunities overseas.

Government, businesses and industry all play a part in promoting and maximising the benefits of our diverse workforce.



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## AMINA'S STORY

When Amina Srio had to flee her home in Aleppo, Syria, she was devastated to depart from her much-loved English language centre, which she had run for many years. After arriving in Melbourne as a refugee, she gained qualifications to teach in Australia and has been giving back ever since.

“Teaching means everything to me, it is my life and I love it. When I’m in the classroom, I forget everything else.

When I arrived in Melbourne, I was happy to be reunited with my sons, but leaving my life behind and starting anew at my age was daunting.

I desperately wanted to get back to teaching and use my skills here in Australia.

I enrolled in university and I got my Graduate Diploma in Education. It was the best thing I could have done.

Volunteering as an English teacher to other refugees has given me the chance to help others and contribute to Australian society. When my students see how much I love my job, they feel inspired to study.

My advice to them is always the same: first, learn English. Second, study or look for a job. Finally, I tell them to become an active member of the community.

Giving refugees like I once was access to education is an essential part of helping them to fully participate in Australian society. I meet so many skilled professionals in my class who have a lot to offer, eager to contribute. Today I dream of starting a business in Melbourne, perhaps a language centre just like the one I had in Aleppo.”

Amina came to Australia under the humanitarian program. Many refugees and new migrants like Amina bring with them professional training, skills and experience, and want to give back.

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*“Teaching means everything to me, it is my life and I love it.  
When I’m in the classroom, I forget everything else.”*

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## Continuing to build harmonious and socially cohesive communities

Our shared Australian values are the cornerstone of our economic prosperity as well as our socially cohesive society.

Sharing our cultural heritage is part of celebrating what it means to be Australian and helping everyone to feel included in our society. Community harmony builds national unity. Common experiences create shared histories and shape shared futures.

In contrast, racism and discrimination undermine our society. We condemn people who incite racial hatred.

Regular inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue is critical to reduce the possibility of tensions within communities and to strengthen cohesion and harmony. Such dialogue helps to reduce prejudice, promote cross-cultural understanding, improve relations between different ethnic and religious groups and enhance the sense of belonging and trust.

Regardless of cultural background, birthplace or religion, everyone in Australia or coming to Australia has a responsibility to engage with and seek to understand each other, and reject any form of racism or violent extremism.

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## Conclusion

Successive Australian Governments have established a firm commitment to a multicultural Australia. It is timely to renew and reaffirm the Government's commitment with this new statement: a clear message on the values and responsibilities that underpin our society, support our national interest and guide how we respond to challenges. It presents a vision for our future as a strong and successful multicultural nation, united by our allegiance to Australia and committed to freedom and prosperity.



Australian Government

[www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs](http://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs)

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