

What is multiculturalism?

As a national public policy, multiculturalism:

- Recognises and celebrates the cultural diversity of Australia's population and respects and values the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within the rule of law;
- Is based on the principles of human rights and access, equity and participation for all in this society;
- Affirms our common humanity through inclusion and equality and encourages the positive acceptance of cultural difference.

Why is this an issue in 2007?

- Some people are fearful that in a society inclusive of many cultures social cohesion will break down, minority groups will benefit unfairly and the threat of terror will increase.
- The vision of a nation enriched through embracing cultural and religious diversity needs to be continually reaffirmed and supported by Government and community leaders and through effective policies. This vision is currently under threat.
- Multicultural and multi-faith Australia presents new opportunities and challenges potentially enriching for all Australians if the diversity can be seen as a resource rather than as a threat.

Ask your candidates

- What is your party's position on multiculturalism as a national policy?
- If elected, how will you ensure readily available and accessible programs for people whose first language is not English?
- Does your party have a plan for facilitating programs that build and strengthen understanding and reconciliation across cultures?
- How will you promote an inclusive, culturally diverse, and respectful Australia?

FAST FACTS

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from the 2006 Census show (www.abs.gov.au):

Over **22%** of Australians were **born overseas**.

Of the people born overseas, the most **common countries** of birth were England, New Zealand, China, Italy, and Viet Nam.

Nearly **80% of people speak only English** at home. The most common languages other than English spoken at home were **Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, and Mandarin**.

64% of the population identify as Christian and 5.6% identify as a member of a religious tradition other than Christianity.

Australia's **three most common non-Christian religious affiliations** were **Buddhism** (2.1%), **Islam** (1.7%) and **Hinduism** (0.7%). **Hinduism is, proportionally, the fastest growing religion** since 1996, more than doubling to 150,000 adherents, followed by Buddhism which doubled to 420,000.

"Every one of us has a part to play in breaking through barriers to understanding and empathy... I encourage all Australians to take the good in our hearts, our homes, our communities and our country, and turn it to the task of learning how to live together in peace, embrace our diversity and celebrate all that we share as human beings knowing that our future depends on each other."

Rev. Gregor Henderson, National Assembly President, Media Release, 20 September 2006

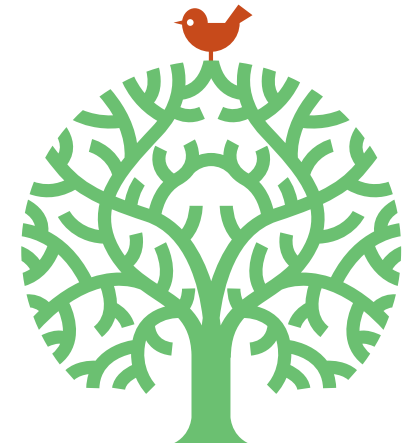


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Multiculturalism



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