

Scanlon Foundation Report shows strong support for multiculturalism

The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2015 Mapping Social Cohesion Report has been released today, and it has produced some very interesting findings.

“At the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) we promote multiculturalism as intrinsic to being Australian. It is very promising to see that a high proportion of Australians support multiculturalism”, said FECCA Chair Joe Caputo. An overwhelming 86% of respondents agreed that multiculturalism has been positive for Australia.

Overall there was also a heightened acceptance of immigration and cultural diversity. A majority of Australians felt immigration has strengthened society, however this sentiment was held more firmly with Australians aged 18 to 34 compared to those aged 60 and above. Younger Australians also felt more positive about the use of temporary skilled workers, with 67% in favour, compared to 44% of older Australians.

An increasing number of Australians support government assistance to help culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities maintain their cultures and traditions. This increased to 41% in 2015. Similarly, close to two-thirds of respondents felt that Australians should “do more to learn about the customs and heritage of ethnic and cultural groups in this country.” A quarter of respondents felt the onus was on migrants to adjust to life in Australia.

Joe Caputo said “It is very encouraging to see that a large majority of Australians understand the importance in retaining the cultural traditions, values and norms of the migrant population. There are many opportunities for the migrant experience to enrich the fabric of our society, and allow people to benefit from different experiences and perspectives.”

The findings of this years’ survey indicated a lowered experience of discrimination. However, the findings specified a generally negative skew towards certain religious groups, particularly Muslims in Australia. The personal attitude concerning Muslims was recorded as 11.3% as strongly negative and 11% as negative. FECCA encourages the support of all people, regardless of their cultural, linguistic or religious background and hope this trend will lower.

FECCA reiterates its dedication to promoting respect and understanding to nurture multiculturalism, and build healthy, strong, engaging and prosperous communities. Joe Caputo said, “All Australians should take steps to combat racism and discrimination in our society”.

FECCA is also disappointed to see that there has been no significant change in attitudes towards asylum seekers. Australia has committed to ensuring all asylum seekers and refugees have a right to seek asylum, irrespective of how they arrive or whether they hold the valid travel or identity documents. We hope to see this trend change in the future.

Media Comments: FECCA Office – (02) 6282 5755, media@fecca.org.au.