

# *The Multiculti System And Its Methods For Dictatorship*

Only people's struggle can protect our national identity and freedoms!. That truth has been shown for all to see. *The National Symposium Responding to Cronulla: Rethinking Multiculturalism* February 21, 2006, at the Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University, in Nathan (Queensland), demonstrated the interlinkages amongst the new class academia, the peak-representatives of certain 'ethnic groups', governmental power and capitalist economics, in Australia's debate on race, immigration and multiculturalism. The representatives at this conference then make sixty recommendations to enforce a multiculti thought-policing of Australia, coupled with the actual tactics of police-dictatorship. These people reveal themselves as enemies of Australia's identity - and of freedom itself.

[National Symposium Responding to Cronulla: Rethinking Multiculturalism February 21s', 2006 Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland](#)

Read for yourselves, the names of the participants and - in their own words - the summary of their speeches. Chilling reading for all concerned with democracy and the ethnic survival of European culture and the native-Australian cultural form of that identity on this Continent.

[The 'Recommendations' And Our Point By Point Rebuttal](#)

Read the sixty recommendations of the dictators and our sharp replies.  
Who stands for freedom?

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National Symposium:  
Responding to Cronulla: Rethinking

# Multiculturalism February 21, 2006 Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University, Nathan (Queensland)

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<http://ausfirst.alphalink.com.au/multiculti-dictators/summary.html>

*The reader will note some errors in the text, unnecessary highlights, bold print etc. The format presented difficulties in its process and we are pressed for time in this Cronulla campaign. These faults do not take away from the text, the full rendering of the psychopathic 'anti-racism' of the speakers. (Australia First Party webmaster.)*

On Feb 21, 2006. the Centre for Multicultural & Community Development, University of the Sunshine Coast and Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University collaborated with the Dept. of the Premier & Cabinet, Queensland Government and diverse faith, interfaith, multicultural and academic institutions and organizations to hold a National Symposium on the theme of "Responding to Cronulla: Rethinking Multiculturalism."

The Symposium was an effort to clarify public understanding on the recent conflict and violence in Cronulla in southern Sydney in December, 2005, which has raised considerable concern among all sectors of Australian society. A variety of perspectives have been voiced in analyzing the riots, including the complexity of racisms emerging in Australia, which can be overt, violent, and often linked with youth, gangs, culture, ethnicity, identity, nationhood, gender and human rights. Messages perpetuated through public discourses and media have also directly linked the events in Cronulla with the alleged "failure" of multiculturalism, government "bending" to ethnic groups and/or the

"unwillingness" of ethnic communities to assimilate. The debates have been reminiscent of post-World War II discussions on assimilation and the White Australia policy.

The Symposium program took account of the following key questions that have emerged from the recent events in Cronulla:

- What are the factors in Australian society that have led to events such as Cronulla?
- Can such conflicts happen again in NSW or elsewhere in Australia or is it a one-off event?
- Has "multiculturalism" failed as a policy? What does "rethinking" multiculturalism mean?
- What are the future challenges for Australia as a "multicultural" society?

This National Symposium, organized by academics and various government agencies, and faith, interfaith, multicultural and other civil society groups, hence sought to:

- provide a platform for dialogue and analysis about the recent conflicts and violence in Cronulla
- develop alternative discourses on and responses to multiculturalism, racism and identity in Australia;
- explore options for future directions, policies and social transformation in Australian society in the context of local, national and global realities.

Over 210 participants from throughout Australia and New Zealand attended the one-day Symposium to hear several speakers share their perspectives and also to engage in dialogue on the issues raised. The program (link to web page) included a Welcome to Country by Indigenous Elder Aunty Delmae Barton: a multi-faith prayer presented by Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Baha'i leaders; opening remarks by the Hon Chris Cummins MP, Qld Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy & Multicultural Affairs; Griffith University and University of the Sunshine Coast administrators; and four panels of speakers focusing on specific themes including (a) Cronulla-Understanding the Conflict and Violence; (b) Government Responses; (c) Racism and Multiculturalism; and (d) Interfaith and Intercultural Perspectives and Initiatives. Based on the views and analyses contributed, a number of implications and recommendations for policies and social practices in multicultural societies such as Australia can be drawn, and are listed in the concluding segment of this Symposium Report.

Grants to assist the MFC and CMCD in hosting the event **were provided by the Qld Dept of the Premier & Cabinet, Islamic Friendship Association of Australia, Griffith**

University's Office of Community Partnership and School of Arts, Media and Culture, and the Interfaith Multicultural Forum, Brisbane. **Other organizations supported the Symposium by sponsoring their representatives to attend as speakers, moderators or**

delegates.

The key ideas, issues and perspectives raised in the welcome speeches **and inoculations** of various panelists are highlighted in the following summaries.

**Welcome Speeches**

**The Hon, Chris Cummins, MP, Queensland Minister for Small Business, Information**

Technology Policy & Multicultural Affairs, recalled growing up as a young **child in** Penang, Malaysia and also living in Brixton in the United Kingdom. These experiences taught him the value of encountering diverse cultures and faiths, and it is such diversity, which contributes positively to the building of a multicultural Australia. **In his words**, "we are all in the same boat." Australians need to respect each other **if we are to live** together in a harmonious, cohesive society that rejects bigotry **and extremism**. All citizens and residents deserve equity and access to public services **provided** by government agencies. Minister Cummins also emphasized that **all Queensland** Government departments are expected to design and implement policies **and initiatives** that promote multiculturalism. He noted in particular that 5750,000 has **been committed** to projects that enhance community engagement with the Islamic **community**. **Also**, he will shortly lead a delegation of Queensland MPs, government officials, and the Qld Police Services to visit Cronulla and learn ideas and lessons that may be helpful to prevent similar conflicts in Queensland. He concluded that Queenslanders need to be vigilant in order to ensure multicultural harmony.

Professor Sharon Bell, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Griffith University, noted that the Symposium reflects a positive sign of cooperation between universities and the Queensland government in engaging with diverse social, multi-faith and multi-cultural communities. In reflecting on the Cronulla conflict, she referred to the perspective of well-known social analyst Noam Chomsky that it is important to look at societal contexts and structures of authority rather than only individual motives. Hence, in her view, it is crucial to ask some critical questions that may lie behind what happened at Cronulla, including what gives license to such violent behavior or counter-responses and what are the profound and powerful social forces at work? For example, in Australia, has the language of war and violence affected younger generations? What may be the effect of labeling a whole community as "evil" or a "threat?" Most importantly, in her view, is there a future for Australia that does not embrace multiculturalism? Professor Bell also expressed her hope that the Symposium would focus not just on the negative aspects of the conflict, but rather on the positive lessons that can be learned.

**Narayan Gopalkrishnan**, Director, Centre for Multicultural & Community Development, University of the Sunshine Coast, began his welcome remarks with the metaphor of a pine tree plantation in Queensland, which reflects a loss of biodiversity in contrast to a rain forest, which retains its biodiversity and sustainability. Likewise, Australian society is sustainable when cultural diversity is enhanced. In his view, the Symposium is a very relevant follow-up to the International Conference hosted by his Centre in early Dec 2005, focusing on the theme of Racisms and the New World Order. He expressed concern over the SMS text messages urging violence and racist attacks on Lebanese and other peoples that preceded the Cronulla riots. While in India during the conflict, he noted that the media images of Cronulla focused on the incidents of violence. He hoped that the Symposium would examine the various issues raised in media representations, including whether racism is a causative factor; is there a "failure" of multiculturalism; are some cultural or ethnic groups not "integrating" into Australian society? In conclusion, he reminded delegates that Australia has been one of the leading nations promoting multiculturalism. In light of the Cronulla conflict, and ongoing views, responses and policy changes, Australia risks losing the gains that have been made.

### **Panel 1: Cronulla-Understanding the Conflict and Violence**

[Moderated by **Lindy Drew**, Community Relations Project Officer, Local Government

Association of Queensland.]

**Scott Pyonting**, Associate Professor, School of Humanities and Languages, University of Western Sydney, presented his analysis of the causes, which underpinned the conflict and violence in Cronulla. He emphasized the central role played by racism and racial hatred in the violent attack of a dominant ethnic and cultural group on a minority, especially the "Lebanese" community, and in general "Middle Eastern" or "Muslims." In this regard, the media had played a negative role in further fuelling attitudes of "revenge" and violence towards these identified minority groups. Apart from publicizing SMS text messages calling for the "killing" of "Lebanese" people, or for "revenge," the media has also helped to reinforce stereotypes of "Middle Eastern" or "Lebanese" men as violent, harassing white women, or engaging in "unruly behavior" on the beaches. In trying to understand what happened at Cronulla, Dr. Pyonting argued that the wider societal realities must be taken into account. In particular, in the post 9/11 era, Australian state policies, including the response to asylum seekers and "ethnically targeted" anti-terror legislation, have helped to demonize the Middle Eastern/Muslim "other" as "enemies." In turn, these policies have provided right-wing groups a kind of "permission to hate" and a "moral license" to pursue violent, racial attacks. Both state government and opposition politicians, and populist media have also contributed to the racialization of crime targeting especially "ethnic gangs" of "Muslim" or "Middle Eastern" youth, leading to "get tough" tactics. This has contributed to "fuelling and even actual incitement of racist hatred." He concluded by reminding delegates that multiculturalism has been a success in Australia for many years, helping to overcome potential conflicts among diverse groups.

**Keysar Trad**, founder of the Sydney-based Islamic Friendship Association of Australia and a Trustee of the Australian Islamic Educational Trust, emphasized that stereotypes and territorialism dictated the attitude of Anglo beach-goers to their non-Anglo guests. There was little or no tolerance exercised towards non-whites (e.g., their soccer games on the sand were seen as a cultural invasion and not respected as a human right). Consequently, "ethnic" youth felt safe only if they are in groups, in many Anglo dominated public recreational spaces. This was in contrast to other places like Maroubra where the local beach youths formed the "Bra" group encompassing diverse ethnic backgrounds and faith traditions. This showed that multiculturalism can transcend "racial tribalism." However, in Cronulla, a dynamic emerged in which ethnic youth forming groups for protection in turn increased the "fears" of Anglo-Saxon people, which fueled more racism and intolerance. These long-standing conflicts and animosities between whites and ethnic groups were not, however, the direct cause of the rioting. Rather, Keysar Trad emphasized that sections of the media, including talkback radio, incited fears against "Lebanese" and other ethnic youth, and by omission or commission, even acts of racist violence, which was also urged via SMS messages. As a result, some marginalized ethnic youth also lashed back violently and criminally despite being advised by community elders to respond peacefully. In Mr. Trad's view, a lack of sufficient political leadership and denial among government leaders of the realities of racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia also failed to prevent the potential conflict. In his view, New South Wales anti-discriminatory, community relations or police agencies needed more power to assertively implement laws against such discrimination. Finally, he appealed for more resources channeled to the youth sector, regardless of ethnicity, to ensure a fair share of opportunities and facilities.

**Graeme Cole**, Public Affairs Manager, Wesley Mission, Sydney, experienced journalist,

and a long-time resident and former youth worker in Sutherland, reminded delegates that Cronulla has experienced deep seated social problems, including conflict, violence and "gang" behavior on the beaches over four decades. He identified one of these problems as the over-consumption of alcohol by youth, which is also prevalent throughout Australian society, promoting a "culture of booze" with no sense of responsibility. The racism and violence that occurred at Cronulla was shocking and must be condemned, though a minority perpetrated this, in his view. Mr. Cole agreed with previous speakers on the impact of world political events, such as the Bali bombing that had killed six Sutherland residents and created attitudes of fear of groups stereotyped as potential enemies. However, he also recounted the post-riots efforts at reconciliation by Christians in the local community. Surfers also offered public apologies to members of the Lebanese community in a spirit of building friendship and trust. He concluded that the question of "identity" of Australians, especially that of popular culture of the youth rooted in the triumph of individualism and a lack of sense of the future, is at the core of the Cronulla conflict and needs to be transformed.

**Jock Collins**, Professor of Economics, Faculty of Business, University of Technology Sydney, focused on the racialization of crime and law and order issues that has been promoted by governments as well as by media. In his analysis, the over-exaggerated and media-sensationalized association of crime and "gangs" with certain ethnic groups, especially of "Middle Eastern" background, in Sydney, has contributed to a feeling of marginalization and racialized bias among immigrant youth, who, as Australians, are demanding their rights. Moreover, he reminded delegates that peoples from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds are capable of wrongful conduct. He also pointed out that Cronulla, as a locality, is predominantly "white" in a city, which is the 7<sup>th</sup> greatest immigrant city in the world. The use of Cronulla beaches had become a "territorial" issue, even though Cronulla constituted a recreational area for all. Prof. Collins also referred to the wider context of the "war on terrorism," which had "unfairly" linked "Middle Eastern" or "Muslim" peoples with terrorist activities. He lauded the NSW Government's assertive actions to control and prevent an escalation of the violence. In his view, the Cronulla riots constituted a "wake-up" call, requiring effective management and leadership efforts. The "moral panic" induced by the media also needs to be challenged. He concluded with a call for social cohesion, which must be maintained and managed, otherwise Australian society will suffer. Multiculturalism is a solution to, rather than a cause of, the problems that occurred at Cronulla.

**Kevin Clements**, Professor of Peace & Conflict Studies and Foundation Director, The Australian Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies, University of Queensland, stressed that powerful dynamics related to racism, sexism and class inequalities must be recognized in trying to understand the conflict at Cronulla. He stated that "everyone" is, in the end responsible for Cronulla. He asks, "In what ways have we encouraged or discouraged racism?" If, for example, the hatred perpetuated in talk-back radio is not denounced, then we are also responsible for the problem. Prof. Clements pointed out that, especially in the post-9/11 era, state systems have responded with policies of violence, pre-emptive strikes and militarization, which have helped to fuel micro-level violent behavior and given "legitimacy to the use force, power, coercion and militarism in advancing political and social objectives." The massive expenditures on armaments, in contrast with a significantly lesser amount of international aid, have not created real security for the world. Furthermore, globalization was wrongly assumed to bring everyone together to in harmony; instead it has created "discontent and confusion between different socio-cultural groups," in part due to a lack of mechanisms for promoting greater intercultural understanding and sensitivity. Norms for non-violence and conflict resolution are subverted by these global dynamics. In his view, many of the

marginalised youth in Cronulla were seeking to defend a system that favours male, white Anglo-Saxon Australians and professionals, and argues for the superiority of Judeo-Christian values. He called on those who are "prime beneficiaries of such systems to add our voice in protest against those who engaged in violent behaviour" or "those who pedal hatred on radio," otherwise "our silence are providing tacit consent to that behaviour." Prof. Clements also reminded us of issues on both sides: the white youths' fear, frustration and alienation in a rapidly changing world, while the Lebanese and Middle Eastern community did not feel fully accepted in mainstream Australia due to the "war on terror," attitudes towards Islam, and unease with the "Australian lifestyle." In his analysis, Prof. Clements argued that multicultural societies like Australia need to establish the norms for living together that would overcome racism and class divisions, and promote civilized dialogue.

In the **open** forum following the panel presentation on the first theme in the program, the following additional points were noted:

- Governments and politicians need to take more decisive action to stop and prosecute any person who engages in promoting racism and hatred, including media representatives.
- The targeting of a specific cultural group is not new in Australian history, as demonstrated by the racism and violence experienced by indigenous peoples.
- The long-standing tensions at Cronulla beaches over a number of decades have not been resolved effectively by political leaders, leaving the media to negatively and inadequately cover the news.
- An active rather than passive citizenship should be promoted to resist hate mongering; to express solidarity with peoples subjected to racist attacks; and to cooperate with the police services in creating a nonviolent social order.

#### Panel 2: Government **Responses**

[Moderated by **David Ip**, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, University of Queensland.]

**Andrew** Bartlett, Deputy Leader of the Australian Democrats and Senator for Queensland, emphasized that his party strongly advocates multiculturalism as "the *best* chance for Australia to have a secure, safe and prosperous future." In his view, the Symposium is not only timely, with its focus on Cronulla, but also because recent comments by the Prime Minister as well as various government politicians "singled out" Australian Muslims again. Senator Bartlett referred to his postcard campaign using the slogan "Strength in Diversity" to promote multiculturalism. He expressed concern that although all political parties in Parliament officially support multiculturalism, it has been "mainly lip service." Hence, public defense for and promotion of multiculturalism is strongly needed. Senator Bartlett argued that the motive of economic self-interest should be used (e.g., export opportunities are enhanced by effective multiculturalism; anti-Muslim hysteria can discourage full-fee paying overseas students). He also called for politicians and community leaders to "more openly promote and sell the benefits of migration." Moreover, people not from the dominant Anglo-Celtic background should be supported in speaking out when they are targeted and attacked. The Senator affirmed the faith-based value of responding to hate and fear with goodness, rather than with aggression and hate. Citizens should not stay silent when political leaders engage in fear-mongering and demonizing. He also reminded participants of the necessity of

learning the truth about Australian history, which included racism and unjust acts against indigenous peoples. In his conclusion, the Senator noted that racist views will prevail unless people challenge them, and promote a positive alternative view encompassed by multiculturalism.

**i Tom Calma**, Aboriginal & Torres Straits Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), noted that local, state, and national contexts and factors need to be taken into account in understanding the Cronulla riots. He reported that the HREOC staff had attended community meetings in the Bankstown and Sutherland areas after the conflicts, and heard, for example, about the efforts of local councilors to bring peoples of diverse backgrounds together. One factor, in his view, is that although the Sutherland Shire is predominantly Anglo-Celtic in ethnic profile, there have been few mechanisms to build bridges between the Anglo-Celtic and other ethnic communities. He affirmed that communities from outside should be welcomed to use Cronulla beaches. However, Lebanese youth also need to manage their needs and behavior. Such conflicts at the beaches, despite being decades old, now have to be urgently resolved. In his view, lifeguards and police personnel need to be capable of dealing with issues such as racism and sexual harassment before they escalate into direct violence. Governments too could have heeded more the warnings found in the HREOC report on the rise of discrimination and racism against Muslims and Arabic members of Australian society. He noted that senior political leaders stayed "silent" while some media outlets were stereotyping Muslims and Arabs and promoting hatred towards them. Hence, there is a major need for multicultural education of children and youth which encourages respect of others as well as nonviolence. He reported on examples of federally funded projects such as working with Muslim women subjected to discrimination, and working with the Muslim community on law enforcement measures.

**Stephan Kerkyasharian**, AM, Chairman, Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW and President, Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, focused on the need to look at what happened at Cronulla in an objective way to ensure that this kind of incident is not repeated. He acknowledged that some ethnic communities (e.g., Lebanese) have been targets of discrimination, and that extremist right-wing racist groups have instigated the violence. He noted that Arabic speaking staff of the CRC have been collecting data on experiences of those communities, including the marginalization and social isolation of the youth, and their proposals for government policies. An additional factor lies in parent-child relationships, though privacy requirements limit collecting information from the parents of the youth. However, Mr. Kerkyasharian also emphasized that some Cronulla residents did not see the Cronulla conflict in terms of "racism," but rather as a protest over how the beaches are being used by outsiders. In his view, the use of public spaces, including beaches, have often neglected youth-oriented activities. He also referred to the lack of community understanding of different faiths. Hence, it is valuable to promote interfaith dialogue conferences in which faith representatives try to find common ground and to accept differences.

**Steve Maquire**, Executive Director, Multicultural Affairs Queensland, informed delegates about the Queensland Government policies to promote multiculturalism and to strengthen social cohesion and harmony. Government leaders have continually expressed commitment to multiculturalism, allocated resources for projects, and



implemented legislation against racism and religious vilification. Recently, the Premier, Government Ministers and Police Commissioner met with 40 ethnic community leaders to strengthen community relations. He noted that the directors of Queensland government departments and agencies are required to implement the Government's multicultural policy in their respective programs. Major activities include engaging with communities via local multicultural liaison workers; an annual multicultural festival and photographic awards; a Confronting Racism in the Community project; youth and school interfaith dialogue projects; and many other initiatives funded by an annual grants scheme (e.g., enhancing respect for and capacities of indigenous communities; promoting cultural diversity via police clubs; welcoming refugees to Queensland; interfaith soccer clubs; multi-faith trivia quiz). A current major MAQ-coordinated initiative focuses on community engagement with the Islamic community, encompassing community-based projects, Muslim youth workers, conferences and a media relations strategy. In conclusion, Mr. Maguire emphasized the importance of communities truly living and interacting with each other in order to break down an "us and them" mentality. While acknowledging that the Government is keen to learn lessons from the Cronulla situation, he felt that what Queensland has developed in its multiculturalism policy is "on the right track."

**Genevieve** Soillac, Centre for Peace Studies & Dept. of French Studies, University of Sydney, presented a principled view of multicultural citizenship for Australia based on the universal values of respect, social solidarity, and human rights. In drawing comparisons between the October 2005 riots in France and the Cronulla violence, Dr. Soillac identified three key areas of difference related to conceptions of identity, exclusion and belonging, and the modeling of citizenship. Unlike the factor on inter-ethnic conflict in Cronulla, the French case was primarily a protest by "disadvantaged and marginalized second generation young people of various ethnic origins" living in the housing estates. In her analysis, the riots were acknowledged as a failure of the French Republican system to deliver on its founding universal values of liberty, social justice, solidarity, equality, generosity and human rights underpinning French identity and citizenship. Hence after the riots, government policies were implemented to promote active or participatory citizenship (e.g., a tutoring program to assist those "failing" high school students from the housing estates; French leaders appealing to non-migrant citizens to actively practice non-discrimination.). In her conclusion, Dr. Soillac argued for the concept of "multicultural citizenship" to complement the multicultural framework of Australian national identity, and provide a genuinely *political* identity for all Australians based on universal human rights, peace and non-violence. This is preferable to "a culturally-based concept of national identity" which can dilute a sense of "belonging" and even be "divisive" (cf. Cronulla).

In the open **forum** following the panel presentation on the second theme in the program, the following additional points were noted:

The social isolation of the youth of some ethnic communities, as well as high rates of unemployment, need to be considered as an important factor in analyzing the Cronulla and potential other sites of conflict.

There is a need for changes in societal structures to build inclusive norms that enable indigenous Australians to feel they are "Australian."  
The history of oppression of indigenous peoples in the formation of Australian nationhood needs to be acknowledged, while also noting normative progress towards recognizing "universal norms."

There should be more dialogue between faiths/religions and "secular" society on all issues that bind humanity together.  
While faiths/religions deserve to be recognized as part of the international "heritage," faith leaders and institutions also need to avoid being "hijacked" leading to conflicts and even violence.

The HREOC has recommended to the Federal Government that religious vilification should also be included in human rights legislation.  
The Australian Broadcasting Authority should inform Australians of Muslim and Arab background about the strategy of monitoring and working with media to overcome religious vilification.

Police multicultural advisory units need to look into ways to empower police personnel to deal with racial discrimination.

### Panel 3: Racism and Multiculturalism

[Moderator: Dr. Kevin Dunn, Senior Lecturer in Geography, University of New South Wales.]

Hurriyet Babacan, Associate Director, Centre for Multicultural & Community Development and Acting Head, School of Social & Community Studies, University of the Sunshine Coast, began by arguing that instead of asking "has multiculturalism failed," it is more appropriate to ask "have we as a nation failed multiculturalism?" In her view, Australia has been a successful exemplar of multiculturalism, which has given the nation's "resilience and strength of character." Dr. Babacan contrasted right-wing criticisms of multiculturalism (e.g., it undermines social cohesion and "Australian" identity; panders to ethnic minorities; advocates "political correctness," overloads social services, etc.) with left-wing criticisms (e.g., it ignores issues of power, class and gender; assumes that culture is static; co-opts people and encourages an ethnic elite, etc). She analyzes recent statements by political leaders accusing segments of one ethnic group (Muslims) as "antagonistic" to Australian values, as a form of "disguised assimilationism." In Dr. Babacan's view, it is essential to ask "who decides" what ought to be the national 'core values?" She cited Prof. Ghasan Haige's conception of multiculturalism as a community which creates spaces for different communities to grow at

their own pace while being enriched via interaction, and to create a new "consensual culture" which recognizes and respects their own identities. She criticized the "silent denial" of racism, which is often correlated with social and economic exclusion. Official policies and discourses have also accentuated a culture of fear (e.g., insecurity and terrorism) and a "worrying" nation that is less compassionate and caring. In concluding, Dr. Babacan identified some challenges: the need to defend multiculturalism vigorously;! separating multiculturalism from issues of immigration; clarifying issues of identity such as who is an Australian and the position of indigenous peoples; dealing with the "hard" issues of racism and social exclusion; and promoting a multiculturalism based on anti- • racism, human rights, and social justice. , •••

**Danny Ben-Moshe**, Associate Professor and Director, Institute for Community Engagement & Policy Alternatives (ICEPA), Victoria University, presented an analysis of the presence and role of "far-right" groups existing in Australia. Such groups (e.g., Australia First Party and Patriotic Youth League (PYL)) involve a small minority in numbers, and are less of a problem to multiculturalism than for example, media personalities who encourage racism and should be subject to existing anti-discrimination legislation. In Prof. Ben-Moshe's view, these far-right groups are "ideological racists" who seek to exploit situations of public discontent and crisis and lead them toward racism. He also reminded delegates that the "far right" is not homogenous in all issues, though it is based on a "white supremacist Christian" identity. These groups share a number of key ideas, including a sense of Australian economic "nationalism," a resistance of "new world order politics," a conspiratorial view of "liberal global capitalism" collaborating with a "Jewish"-controlled United Nations, a belief that Australia is losing its national identity and independence; and criticisms of uncontrolled immigration, multiculturalism, and "liberal" views on homosexuality. With these ideological beliefs, the far-right groups therefore sought to foment the ethnic and social tensions that occurred in crises like Cronulla. However, Prof. Ben-Moshe pointed out that the efforts of Australia First and the PYL failed to generate Cronulla-type conflicts elsewhere in Australia by mobilizing the "discontent." While this is a positive sign of the contribution of multiculturalism to Australian society, he stressed the need for Australians to be vigilant and to monitor such groups and respond effectively to them, including finding ways to talk to forces that stand for anti-multiculturalism.

**Greg Noble**, Acting Director, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, reported on some key insights, from his research study on younger Australians' public attitudes toward multiculturalism. He acknowledged that while multiculturalism is perceived as helping people to learn from each other, youth as a group feels a significant "lack of control" over their future, as well as incomplete acceptance by the rest of society. In regards to the issue of "identity," Dr. Noble noted that the youth display an openness to interpersonal relations, whereby they become a part of "mainstream" Australia. He cautioned against a "moralizing" discourse on multiculturalism expressed in terms of "good and bad," "right and wrong." His study did reveal experiences of racism and discrimination, though for many, this was managed in practical terms (like "getting along," and tolerance). Moreover, the youth reflected multiple "belonging" and identities in cultural, religious, social and other dimensions. They develop intercultural relationships, which broaden their lives. Dr. Noble argues against "cultural fetishism," a tendency to see others in terms of single cultural identity, which can encourage exclusion. In his conclusion, in analyzing Cronulla, he argues for a position of "ambivalence" that takes into account both the complexities of multiculturalism and of racism. Being critical of multiculturalism does not necessarily mean rejection of its positive aspects and practices, while endorsement of multiculturalism does

not mean a lack of affirmation of core Australian values. Multiculturalism is not a failure but is an "unfinished business" that needs to be understood in its complexities in order to build an inclusive Australian society.

**William Gates**, Associate Professor & Director of Nulloo Yambah, Central Queensland University's Indigenous Centre of Learning, Spirituality & Research Centre, began by clarifying that most indigenous peoples do not like the "ethnic" label or being positioned by multiculturalism policies, since they are different and did not arrive in Australia from elsewhere. He noted that while Central Queensland has a very well attended multicultural fair, and the university supports reconciliation and multiculturalism, there is a prevailing attitude of racism in the wider community. Racist slogans have been plastered on his Centre, vehicles openly display racist slogans, and an African was racist-targeted as an Aboriginal in a drive-by shooting. Prof. Gates emphasized that the lived experiences and relationships of indigenous peoples are found in their daily lives - in families, communities, universities, schools, workplaces and shared public spaces (like beaches). He questioned how effective the anti-racist policies and laws of governments as deterrents to racism. In his view, "top-down approaches give a false sense of harmony and a veneer of uniformity and conformity." He advises against the suppression of discussion of racism in universities, and recommends engagement with those with racist views, who need to be invited to attend anti-racist professional development training. Cultural awareness days do not necessarily address racism, and "whole family, whole school and whole community" approach is vital. In his conclusion, Prof. Gates called for educating people to be responsible custodians of the land, and to love and share the land in their hearts in cooperation with indigenous peoples. He argued that citizenship education can only go so far, what is needed is a holistic approach to living, to be "caretakers" of this country, to overcome violence, and to be peacemakers with people, other creatures and the land.

In the open **forum** following the panel presentation on the third theme in the program, the following additional points were noted:

- Multiculturalism as a policy still needs to be more fully understood by politicians, teachers, media or faith leaders, and Cronulla needs to be acknowledged as a "wake-up call" by Australians.
- Refugees as a group have experienced considerable discrimination. Opportunities should be increased to provide them with literacy, and governments should enhance the promotion of their human rights.
- If the economic situation deteriorates or other crises (e.g., war) occur, the "far right" will take the opportunity to exploit feelings and fears among the wider population.
- While governments have official policies for promoting multiculturalism, it remains a "soft" area and community education programs remain under-funded.
- What strategies are needed to seek out and engage racists, "terrorists" and extremists in dialogue?

Panel 4: Interfaith and Intel-cultural Perspectives [Moderated by Mary Gavin, Director, Always People]

Gary Bourna, Professor of Sociology, UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations (Asia-Pacific) and Head, School of Social & Political Inquiry, Monash University, emphasized that the Cronulla riots, while displaying racial overtones, were not primarily about religion, ethnicity, or race. Rather, such thuggery had been prevalent on the beaches for half a century as the participants displayed 'the deep Australian macho values of drinking beer, chasing women, and enjoying beaches/'<sup>1</sup> Prof. Bouma noted that white supremacist groups fueled the initial causes, while both religion and culture did not last long as causative factors. He also challenged the view that religion (especially Islam) and multiculturalism cannot work together. Like other religions, he is confident that Islam can and will be integrated in Australian society. He points to several signs of hope, which affirm the success of multi-cultural and multi-faith policies. For example, protests against -the Prophet Muhammad cartoons were non-violent and conducted with respect towards Australian law, institutions and fellow citizens. Monash University recently conducted induction sessions for clergy, new to Australia, to help them understand and help build a socially cohesive multicultural and multi-faith society. Prof. Bouma also reported on several initiatives to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding via dinners, multi-faith gatherings, conferences, international networking and City Councils' interfaith kits and booklets informing citizens about various faiths in their localities, and how they are building social cohesion in the community. He also referred to proposals for education and schooling to help overcome ignorance and misunderstanding of religions. In his conclusion, Prof. Bouma noted that, in contrast to countries, which have experienced difficulties or failure in "enforced secularism," Australia has, through its multicultural policies, provided a context enabling religious groups to live together in productive harmony.

Jeremy Jones, AM, Past President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and Director of International and Community Affairs, Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, began by sharing some personal experiences, which, in his view, demonstrated that many Australians embrace a "feeling of unity" across diverse cultures, faiths and classes. For example, at a recent World Cup preliminary match, Australians who are Muslims, Jews and other cultural background "united" to celebrate Australia's victory. He also noted that during the Sydney's Multicultural *Eid* Festival and Fair, Christian and Jewish representatives joined in the welcome address and while some Muslim speakers expressed concern over aspects of government policy, all participants affirmed the success of multiculturalism. Mr. Jones pointed out that extreme racist far-right fringe groups could only mobilize a small number of people to join the Cronulla riots. Nevertheless, vigilance is needed to ensure that the far-right groups do not succeed in bringing their racist agenda into the mainstream by manipulating the concerns of individuals over some issues. Mr. Jones called on Symposium delegates to consider using available federal, state and territory legislation against racism and/or religious vilification. He further emphasized the "very real need for people of faith to be pro-active in healing, in comforting and in displaying, very publicly, compassion and articulating a vision of a multicultural, harmonious Australia." Religions have a significant role to play in helping to overcome Cronulla-related conflicts. This was demonstrated when he joined Muslim community leaders for Friday in prayers at the Auburn mosque followed by a multi-faith walk of solidarity to the site of a Uniting Church Hall destroyed by fire soon after the violence. Mr. Jones concluded by stressing that religious communities need to avoid their religions "being used, co-opted or hijacked by people pursuing narrow, partisan political agendas." This also requires that religious communities take moral and principled stance, not tied to specific political ideologies or parties. He urged people of religion to speak out publicly against those extremists who use religion as a destructive force; to help those in

distress; to befriend the alienated; help those who felt shameful after Cronulla "deal with their shame and direct them towards a means of contrition."

Jamila **Hussain**, Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Technology and member, Muslim Women's National Network of Australia and Women's Interfaith Network, reiterated the observation that since Tampa and 9/11, Muslims in Australia have become a public object of "hate." Some politicians and right-wing media commentators have blamed Muslims for "not fitting in," "failing to assimilate" and suspected them of "supporting and planning terrorism." She emphasized that Muslim women, due to their identifiable apparel, have especially been subjected to this antipathy, suffering insults, assaults and vilification. Ignorance has also resulted in non-Muslim women being mistakenly targeted. Consequently, some Muslim women are unwilling to leave their homes, shopping only in pairs or accompanied by a male relative or discarding the *hijab*. However, she noted that many women have continued to wear their *hijab*, "refusing to compromise their beliefs and give way to intimidation." Furthermore despite this climate of fear, Muslim women's groups and women of other faiths are continuing to cooperate in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding. For example, the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA) recently held an interfaith conference in which Muslim women reported on their organization's activities (e.g., aged care and other welfare work, migrant resettlement, youth activities, interfaith dialogue, school visits to talks to church groups, mosque open days, mutual help activities and "food and friendship" functions). In her view, developing personal relationships has been very important in reducing fear and tensions in the community, showing that people everywhere have similar aspirations despite cultural and lifestyle diversity. In 1999, there was the successful establishment of the Women's Interfaith Network (WIN), which now meets monthly to encourage mutual understanding and promote peace among many different religious traditions and indigenous women. Ms. Hussain stressed that interfaith dialogue is most effective when it "interfaith in action, each individual doing what he or she can to form friendships and build bridges with others."

**Toh Swee-Hin (S.H. Teh)**, Professor & Director, Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University and Laureate, UNESCO Prize for Peace Education 2000, initially referred to exemplars of interfaith dialogue in the war-torn island of Mindanao in the Philippines. He emphasized that these conflicts are not caused by faith or religion per se, but rather stem from the marginalisation of Muslims who then struggle to gain self-determination and justice from Christian-dominated systems. However, there are inspiring models of faith leaders and organizations bringing Muslims and Christians together to overcome centuries of fear, distrust and hatred, to increase understanding and respect, and to cooperate in solidarity projects meeting the needs and dignity of all. He was inspired by Muslim and Christian youth cooperating to help refugees, and through acting together, they were able to understand each other's faiths more deeply and find a common ground of shared values. This example has relevance for building and healing relationships in communities like Cronulla and Bankstown. In regard to indigenous peoples, Prof. Toh highlighted their marginalization from colonial and current globalization policies of unequal development. In his view, peoples of faith need to go beyond talking and understanding toward solidarity actions to overcome injustices and unsustainability. More generally, Prof. Toh argues that everyone needs to question if he/she may also be complicit in racist, unjust and unsustainable structures and to peacefully transform those structures locally and globally (e.g., institutionalized racism, unfair trade, power of transnational corporations, militarization, human rights violations, etc.). Moreover, faiths should help to move people to challenge the ideology of over-consumerism and re-think the meaning of "happiness," which has been entrapped in

consumerism, power and self-centredness. All faiths also need to promote education for active nonviolence among their followers, so that conflicts, like those that emerged in Cronulla, may not escalate easily into a cycle of violence and counter-violence, but rather move toward constructive resolution and reconciliation. Finally, interfaith dialogue needs to be accompanied by intra-faith dialogue, whereby faith members are willing to critically review their own beliefs and practices for consistency with the values and principles of a culture of peace.

In the open forum following the panel presentation on the fourth theme in the program, the following additional points were noted:

- The voices of women in the Cronulla conflict and violence need to be better heard and included in discussions on what happened at Cronulla and efforts to resolve the conflict.
- Electronic media is also now a major a source of ideas on racism and violence and need to be centrally considered in education for building a culture of peace.
- While IT can be helpful in promoting global dialogue and networking among marginalized groups including women, the internet with its innumerable sources of "information" and spaces for exclusive groups to form, can also be a barrier to broader social dialogue.
- Since interfaith dialogue initiatives usually attract those with moderate attitudes and openness to learning from others, there is a need to bring people holding extremist views into these dialogues. However, it is most crucial to work with those who may not be committed yet to any position, and to convince them that respect and understanding is better than extremist views.
- Schools, as formal educational institutions, have a major responsibility in helping children and youth, who bring views and attitudes from their families and communities into the classroom, to process those views critically. Suppressing ideas that are, for example, racist will not necessarily transform those attitudes. Rather, learners need spaces for them to critically analyze their own perspectives and with teacher facilitation, become open to challenging those deeply held beliefs.

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