

Summary Notes: Written form

Breakout Session *New & Emerging Communities Moving Forward*

Facilitator: Parsu Sharma-Luita JP, Board Member, ECCV

1. Aleem Ali, Manager, Welcoming Cities – *Creating more welcoming and inclusive communities* Summary

- First Nations people are the original welcomers to the lands in Australia and need to be included
- Welcoming Cities tries to ensure that they are included in the conversation at the forefront rather than the back end
- *What does it take to create more welcoming and inclusive communities?* Welcoming Cities' work tries to prepare our local communities well for diversity so that receiving communities get a good understanding of their neighbours and what infrastructure is required to meet the needs of new communities. Multi-sectoral approaches are required, that includes local government, businesses, NGOs, young people and elders to talk about what it means to be a welcoming place.
- Welcoming Cities has a framework around that where communities setting standards and local governments and services can use them as benchmarks.
- A 'business as usual' approach won't work.
 - One choice: continue the path we are going
 - Second choice: succumb to the voices of fear and take an exclusionary approach
 - Third approach: 'fight fire with fire' and continue with attacks and divisive tactics on the other.
 - Forth option is: 'to tell a different story'. Developing a counter narrative is the way to go and this is really hard work

Key learnings and recommendations

- We need to pursue a counter narrative that actually represents the real diversity of the nation.
- We need to stop telling stories on behalf of people and support people to tell their own stories.
- We need a more strengths based approach that emphasises the positive economics of multiculturalism i.e. economic growth and the enriching of our communities.
 - Create the best possible environments be created for NE communities to flourish in
 - Get local government better equipped to settle people successfully
 - Inclusion and diversity policies shouldn't be developed and implemented in silos. It needs to be part of the economic development conversation

2. Nivy Balachandran, Juris Doctor Candidate Regional Coordinator URI (United Religions Initiative) – *Local and international interfaith*

Summary

- Nivy talked about how interfaith initiatives can help us create a version of Australia that is more inclusive and less divisive.
- She feels Australia has become a quite divisive nation again and she feels the public discourse contributes to culturally diverse people's feelings that their sense of belonging is fragile again and could disappear. Culturally diverse communities and their rights are often diminished with people playing with back-pocket race card.
- There are challenges Australia needs to address to remain inclusive and pluralistic.
- Global interfaith organisations, like the United Religions Initiative promote that people with different faiths and beliefs meet, relate and talk to each other.

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Key learnings and recommendations

- Australians need to become more sophisticated in the way how we engage with each other and relate to other people who are different to us. Too many people don't realise that they never spend time with people who are culturally different to them. It is everyone's responsibility to create inclusion and stop exclusion. We don't have to reinvent the wheel.
 - Encourage people to join interfaith ceremonies and other cultural groups' events and celebrate differences in belief.
 - Being more proactive and sharing positive stories and learnings with family members and others who are still 'racist'.
 - The multicultural dialogue and interfaith work needs to reach out to Aboriginal people who are currently excluded from the debates and
 - Positive example: URI is embarking on initiative 'Sacred Australia' to galvanise conversations to rediscover Indigenous Australia and to help people on a journey go on a journey towards healing
 - Also, Interfaith Centre of Melbourne developed a I'll Dine with You movement to share a meal in public spaces with people from other cultures and with other beliefs, e.g. Muslims. There is much scope to develop this into a much bigger display of public support and celebration of respect and inclusivity.

Q & A

1. One question related to 'if we can get multiculturalism and diversity right' in a country historically built on racism.
 - Aleem responded that one way is to 'stop to have binary conversations that divide us' and 'to sit around the table'. But sharing food and festivals are just the beginning.
 - Nivy responded that we need to get good news stories into the media. The media still doesn't accurately captures what is good about Aboriginal and multicultural Australia.
2. Another question was about young people and how they can be engaged
 - Aleem: it is important for everyone, particularly for young people to dig below the stereotypes. And also to help them understand their own stories and our history and migrant story. People will then develop have a sense of belonging they will participate and contribute in society. Nuanced conversations are needed to find out how to best celebrate diversity.
 - Nivy: She started a group in 2008 when she started to have fears about growing Islamophobia and wanted to address this. In these groups, young people have the opportunity to experience how great diversity is further develop and celebrate tolerance and respect. They will also learn how to be proud of their background and achievements, for example, to be Indian and Australian at the same time. For young people to be an active part of the decision making at the highest level that is crucial and the ECCV and the Centre for Multicultural Youth is to be commended for their interest to genuinely include young people in decision making.

Third Speaker Zakia Baig didn't attend

Notes taken by Robert Gruhn