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Synopsis

Multiculturalism-a unifying force?

To say that we have the world in Australia is a truism. It is also a truism to say that under Multiculturalism all Australians can maintain their traditions and cultures whilst practicing Australian citizenship.

It is inevitable, though that those traditions and cultures create a strong bond with and allegiance to the country of origin, its history, culture and ethos. This becomes manifest especially in times of crisis and there is an instinct which drives members of ethnic communities to take sides.

This may manifest itself in Australia in a number of ways: Lobbying Governments to take action in support of one side or the other in such a conflict, demonstrations by one or more sides favouring particular parties to the conflict or taking action (sometimes violent) against members of a group in Australia identified with an opposing side in the conflict.

That may be the reaction within or among ethnic groups. But then there is mainstream Australia. Some populist views suggest that Multiculturalism is divisive, that it is a negative result of globalisation and, in the extreme, that we are becoming victims of a global conspiracy to destroy Australia helped and abetted by Multiculturalism.

All of this demonstrates that Multiculturalism is not properly understood in all quarters. It also demonstrates that we must be able to deal with the impact of global developments on Australia or particular parts thereof. Most importantly we must find ways to ensure that Multiculturalism is understood as a means of bringing all Australians together as a nation and that our cultural diversity should be used to as a smart shield to prevent global events from damaging our nation. Better still, can we use Australian Multiculturalism to help reduce the impact of international crisis?

National Policy Forum
Multiculturalism in the New Millennium
29-30 March 2001