



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Racial Vilification

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Submissions to the Inquiry into Racial Vilification in the ACT

By the Federation of the Chinese Community of Canberra Inc (FCCC)

Overall, Australia is a multiracial, multicultural harmony society. We are one of the best countries in the world that practices multiculturalism, and people with all ethnic backgrounds work together to achieve very good social and economic outcomes. However, racism still exists in some corners of Australian society, and from time to time some ethnic communities become the victim of those racial attacks and vilification. Over the years our Chinese community in Canberra has experienced some racism incidents. This submission is to highlight our suggestions in counter these racism incidents and to work together with the ACT police and authorities to mitigate the incidents.

1. Focus on teenage education about racial harmony and multiculturalism

It has been reported that most of the perpetrators of racial attacks were teenagers. We need to examine if the current education for teenagers about multiculturalism and racial harmony is effective. We suggest the following:

We need to emphasize racial harmony and multicultural education for college / teenage students with some effective methods. The education needs to be tailored, rather than just rhetoric. A few main points to address:

- a) Australia is a nation of migrants that over 40% of Australians were either born from overseas, or the offspring of migrants. Many ethnical groups have been in Australia over a hundred years, for example, records show that Chinese settlers had immigrated to Australia before 1848 (National Museum Australia).
- b) Australia, a great country, as we know today socially and economically, is the result of all Australia's efforts. Many minority ethnics have made tremendous contributions to this country. They are equal citizens to all fellow Australians.
- c) We need to respect different cultures, including costumes, food, and lawful social norms.
- d) We need to understand that people may come from countries with different social values and social political systems, but that doesn't mean these migrants were naturally representative of countries of their origin. They live here and many have become Australia citizens, they share Australian common values, they are loyal to Australia, and they are one of us. We are one, we are Australian. Any discrimination is baseless and wrong.

2. Police and authorities need to adopt a sensible approach toward any report of racial incidents.

It is very important for police and authorities to handle racial attack incidents sensibly.

2.1 Acknowledge the true color of racism and don't whitewash it.

It is heart-breaking that communities especially those with Asian ethnic backgrounds in recent years have been targeted by those culprits, who just didn't like their skin color. And yet we found that sometimes our police and authorities' approaches were not sensible, including the denial of the racial-hatred nature of these incidents and jumping to the conclusion without any evidence that these incidents were merely teenagers' behaviors of opportunists.

Although Australia is one of the best in the world in terms of social harmony and multiculturalism, we need to acknowledge racism as it is and acknowledge the existence of racism in this country. We need to have the guts to face reality and call it what it is. Then we can deal with it properly.

2.2 Work together with the community, and set up a community network

We suggest the police and authorities can organize regular forums with the ethnical communities to talk about the issue, at least once a year, to gain better understanding of our concerns and to discuss with us about the way to better handle the issue. We know that the police and authorities have limited resources. But the local communities can help. Most communities have volunteers who are willing to handle the tasks like language translation and assist the police with the situation when it is culturally sensitive and for victims' wellbeing aftermath.

3 Do more in helping and protecting international students

There were situations in which international students didn't know what to do when faced with those racial orientated attacks. They were weak victims, not because they couldn't defend themselves, but afraid of doing so could face deportation. This misunderstanding was largely caused by some misinterpreted international students' guidelines either issued by agents in their own countries or here.

Authorities need to update the international student guidelines to specify correctly what they can or shouldn't do. They should be able to self-defend from mental abuse or physical harm by the racial vilification and attack. They shouldn't feel they are treated as second class residents in this country.

4 Raise the bar to punish the culprits who committed racial attack and vilification

Any culprit who committed racial attack should face adequate reprimand, in some cases fines or even jail term needs to be introduced depending on the seriousness of the consequence. People should realize the severe consequences these victims suffered; some could be life-long, both mentally and physically. One of the reasons that there are so many recidivists is due to lack of enough punishment. Those offenders can easily get away for whatever they have done. We need to change that.

In summary, we would like to work with Australian police and authorities at all levels to deal with the situation and continue our support and efforts to build a social harmony and peaceful society.

Hao Gu

The president of FCCCI

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