

MEDIA RELEASE - NSW ALLIANCE AFFIRMS MULTICULTURAL SUCCESS

Feb 20 2013

An alliance of organisations and individuals from across New South Wales have come together to re-affirm in a joint statement their support of the state's multicultural and multi-faith community.

This is their joint statement in response to the Geert Wilders visit to Australia to spread bigotry and disharmony.

New South Wales is a multicultural and multi-faith society in which racial, religious and linguistic diversity is embraced as a strength. This vibrant diversity has generated social, cultural and economic benefits for all of the state's citizens.

The community holds a diversity of views and beliefs, observes many different cultures and traditions and speaks a wide range of languages. The 2011 ABS Census illustrated our cultural diversity: In New South Wales 31.4% of people were born overseas; 48.1% had at least one parent born overseas; 27.5% speak a language other than English at home; and 129 different faiths are followed.

Community harmony in New South Wales is strengthened by a long-standing, shared commitment across government, community and business to respect and embrace difference, to respond appropriately to unjust treatment and vilification, and to recognise and celebrate our common bond as proud Australians.

We have a collective responsibility to respect fellow citizens and preserve the social cohesion that characterise New South Wales as a great society. We also encourage genuine and constructive engagement and dialogue as a means to achieving greater understanding and acceptance of diversity.

We welcome challenging ideas and debate which does not incite hatred and animosity towards specific cultural or faith-based communities. All people of New South Wales have a right to practice their faith and observe their cultural traditions and languages free from discrimination or vilification.

This statement is endorsed by the following organisations and individuals (in alphabetical order)

- Affinity Intercultural Foundation
- Amitabha Buddhist Association of New South Wales
- Australian National Imams Council
- Columban Mission Institute
- Islamic Council of NSW
- Standing Committee on Interfaith Dialogue for the World Fellowship of Buddhists
- The Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay
- The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW and the ACT

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