Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's Inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia

February, 2021

About Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)

MYAN is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia, and those who work with them. Our vision is that all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are supported, valued and thriving in Australia.

MYAN works in partnership with young people, government, and non-government agencies at the state and territory and national levels to ensure that the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are recognised and addressed in policy and service delivery.

MYAN provides expert policy advice, undertakes a range of sector development activities, and supports young people to develop leadership skills. MYAN has developed the *National Youth Settlement Framework* to support a targeted and consistent approach to addressing the needs of newly arrived young people settling in Australia.

About this submission

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's Inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia*. This submission provides a national perspective; drawing on the MYAN's breadth of experience working with young people aged 12-24 from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their communities and the youth and multicultural sectors across Australia.

As at 2016, the Australian Census identified that **45 per cent of all young people in Australia aged 12 to 24 were from refugee and migrant backgrounds; 49 per cent of Australians had one or both parents born overseas and 300 languages were spoken in Australian homes.**[1]This diversity is reflective of Australia's globally recognised policies on multiculturalism.

Key Messages

MYAN remains committed to contributing to the protection and strengthening of Australia's multiculturalism. It is fundamental to our vision and core business and we value working collaboratively government and the community in achieving this. A strong multicultural and socially cohesive Australia is fundamental to our success as a nation, and particularly significant for young people who arrive in Australia as refugees and migrants, and those born in Australia to refugee or migrant parents.

Our submission is largely focused on the rise in Australia of ideologies, groups and individuals commonly referred to as 'right wing extremists' who believe that 'white identity' is under attack and prescribe to a set a ideologies that include promoting the notion of 'white nationalism' which at its core is a profoundly racist concept.[2] We believe these racist ideologies are a threat to inclusive

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) *The Census of Population and Housing (Census)*
https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016
[2] Human Rights Council of Australia (2020) *Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* Available at:
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Nationhood/Submissions

democracy and multicultural harmony, and inconsistent with the values shared by the majority of Australians. These groups have no place in contemporary Australia.

MYAN's key concern is that **the racist foundations of these movements presents a critical risk to Australia's community cohesion.** MYAN condemns extremism and hate speech in all its forms, and we urgently call on all levels of government to recognise and address the racist elements present in these movements. We call for more public debate on this issue, stronger policy, and legal responses, and more effort to regulate systems and forums that promote these ideologies.

This submission is focussed on:

1. The existence in Australia of far-right extremist groups and individuals who support, promote and act on extremist ideologies.
2. The racist ideology which is a hallmark of these groups, the impact it has on politics and media, and racism's threat to social cohesion.
3. The critical importance of preserving the socially protective factor of multiculturalism in Australia.

1. Far right extremism in Australia

1.1. **Racist ideologies are directly affecting Australia and its political life.** Recent reports from the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) about the increasing threat in Australia from 'extreme, right wing terrorism'[3] is of grave concern to MYAN. ASIO has publicly shared that that extreme right wing groups in Australia currently constitutes up to 40% of its counter-terrorism caseload and they '…are more cohesive and organised than they have been in previous years.'[4]

1.2. **Strong political leadership on social cohesion. MYAN was encouraged by Prime Minister Scott Morrison's acknowledgement in 2020** that "Australia has yet again proven in 2020 that we are the most successful multicultural nation in the world."[5] He went on to say "… my Government will make every effort to ensure our country remains cohesive and united into the future."[6] MYAN believes that doing so requires acknowledging and addressing the real threat right wing extremism presents to Australia's cohesion, unity, and safety.

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[3] Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (2019) *Annual Report 2018-19* Available at https://www.transparency.gov.au/annual-reports/australian-security-intelligence-organisation/reporting-year/2018-2019-22
[4] Ibid.
[5] Prime Minister of Australia (2020, December 18) *Media Statement* [Press Release] Available at: https://www.pm.gov.au/media/ministry-0
[6] Ibid.

1.3. While the focus of violent extremism has overwhelmingly been on Islamist terrorism and radicalisation[7], **there is an urgent need to widen the scope of what counts as 'violent extremism' in an era of alt-right extremism across the world.**

1.4. Although white nationalistic ideology has existed in Australia since colonisation[8], since 2001 **Australia has witnessed the formation and rise of numerous alt-right or neo-Nazi groups,** including the True Blue Crew, the United Patriots Front, the Conservative National Party, the Antipodean Resistance, the Soldiers of Odin, Identity Australia, Reclaim Australia, the National Socialist Network, and the Lad's Society, amongst many others.[9] These groups are known for combining online organisation with intimidating street activity.[10]

1.5. **Research has identified a number of commonalities shared across these contemporary groups.** Although there can often be division between and within these groups[11], they perceive themselves as speaking on behalf of the 'common person', and share some or all of the follow characteristics:

- False ideas of biologically or culturally separate races and false narratives of threat to the imagined "white nation".[12]
- A nostalgic, ultra-nationalism view of Australia, where 'true Australians' shared values and cultural characteristics that are threatened by 'outsiders' who are the risk to Australia's social fabric, including non-white immigrants, Muslims, and those who support Aboriginal land rights, multiculturalism, environmentalism, human rights and animal rights.
- Anti-Semitism .
- A stereotyping and deep opposition toward Islam, Muslims and Muslim cultures.
- A belief that immigrants must assimilate into a 'unitary' Australian culture.
- A general disdain for progressive people and ideas.
- A strong sense of heterosexual gender distinction whereby men are 'heroic' protectors of 'capable but vulnerable' women and thus have a general disdain for feminists and their supporters and the LGBTIQ+ community.
- General distrust in government and government systems

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[7] Agius C, Cook K, Nicholas L, Ahmed A, bin Jehangir H, Safa N, Hardwick T & Clark S. (2020) *Mapping right-wing extremism in Victoria. Applying a gender lens to develop prevention and deradicalisation approaches* Melbourne: Victorian Government, Department of Justice and Community Safety: Countering Violent Extremism Unit and Swinburne University of Technology.

[8] Campion. K (2019) *A "lunatic fringe?" The persistence of right wing extremism in Australia* Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 13 Issue 2.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Markus, Andrew (2018) *The far right's creeping influence on Australian politics* Available at: https://theconversation.com/the-far-rights-creeping-influence-on-australian-politics-93723

[11] Ibid.

[12] Human Rights Council of Australia (2020) *Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* Available at:
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Nationhood/Submissions

- A willingness to defend the state against what they consider to be poor government policies threaten the integrity of the nation (including democratically elected governments).
- A strong support of national defence including a willingness to support violence and militant activities in defence of nation and their perceptions of national culture.[13]

1.6 **History has clearly demonstrated how dangerous nationalist and racist sentiment is for liberal democracies.[14]** Australia's social cohesion, the efficiency of our multicultural policy, and many Australians would be significantly harmed by any return to concepts of an ethnically or racially defined 'nation'[15].

1.7 **National identity should emphasise shared democratic values,** rather than a person's ethnicity or the length of time someone has lived in Australia. Traditional concepts of Australian nationhood that rely on stereotypes that are at odds with contemporary Australia would alienate many in the community including young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who share a sense of civic duty, and connection to Australia.[16]

1.8 **Far right extremist groups adopt sophisticated recruitment and radicalisation techniques**, including the deliberate targeting of young people, similar to those seen among jihadists[17]. Given the Australian Government's significant investment [18]in counter terrorism activities[19] in the last two decades alone, there will be many evidence-based learnings that can be applied here.

1.9 Because these groups have not been proscribed as terrorist groups in Australia, **they remain free to recruit, influence and organise.[20]**

1.10 **America's domestic counter terrorism strategy ignored the growing danger of far-right extremism in the two decades since 9/11 (mainly focused on American and foreign born jihadists), which had significant consequences for public safety and community cohesion.** For example,

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[13] Lewis, J., Lewis, B., Cameron, R., Pond, P., Ghumkhor, S. and Mohamud, M.H., (2017) *Mediating Extremist Violence: A Report on the Role of Media, Far-Right Politics and Gender in Extremist Violence and Social Cohesion in Victoria*. Melbourne, Vic, Australia: Community Resilience Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

[14] Tavan. G Dr (2018) *Aggressive nationalism is on the rise* Latrobe University Available at: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/aggressive-nationalism-is-on-the-rise

[15] Human Rights Council of Australia (2020) *Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Nationhood/Submissions

[16] MYAN (2019) *Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* Available at www.myan.org.au

[17] Human Rights Council of Australia (2020) *Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Nationhood/Submissions

[18] E.g. In the 2018-19 financial year, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) alone spent $27,416,195 on counter-terrorism operations

[19] E.g. $13.4 million in 2015 to prevent and counter radicalisation and involvement with extremist groups (including $1.6 million for the Living Safe Together Grants Programme)

[20] McGowan, Michael (2019) *Australian white nationalists reveal plan to recruit 'disgruntled, white male population'* The Guardian Australia, 12 November Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/12/australian-white-nationalists-reveal-plans-to-recruit-disgruntled-white-male-population

studies show that between 2008-2017, 71 percent of the extremist-related fatalities committed in America were committed by members of the far right or white-supremacist movements.[21]

1.11 **The monitoring and investigation of extremism in Australia must include domestic right wing and white supremacist extremist groups and individuals.** The right wing extremist attacks in Christchurch in 2019 demonstrate that it only takes one individual to listen to, embrace and act on a violent extremist ideology to have a tragic and devastating impact.[22]

2. Racism a core foundation of far right extremism

2.1 MYAN agrees with the Federal Treasure Josh Frydenberg who has stated that there is an obligation in Australia to "…take on hate wherever we see it."[23] **We remain seriously concerned about signs that organised racism is on the rise**, and that individuals are also emboldened to engage in racist behaviour and criminal activity.

2.2 **COVID-19 has resulted in extreme isolation for many people who are using online platforms to spread right wing hate**[24] and conspiracy, and people are becoming radicalised through the extreme accessibility of this material in the mainstream space.[25] Many subscribers to the white supremacy theories espoused by far-right extremist groups expressed on online platforms, support for violence, armed action, revolution, terrorism and race war.[26]

2.3 **This makes particular groups in our society more vulnerable** than ever to racism,[27] including young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

2.4 **Racism and discrimination exists despite the diversity of the Australian community.** Recent findings from the Scanlon Foundation's 2020 Mapping Social Cohesion Report has found that while support for multiculturalism remains high in Australia (84% across all demographics), substantial negative sentiment towards national groups from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Almost half of respondents reported negative feelings towards people of Iraqi and Sudanese backgrounds, and 47 per cent felt the same towards Chinese-Australians.[28]

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[21] Anti-Defamation League (2018) *Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2017: An ADL Centre on Extremism report* Available at: https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/murder-and-extremism-in-the-united-states-in-2017

[22] Ibid.

[23] Murphy. K (2021) *Antisemitism and holocaust denial on the rise in Australia Josh Frydenberg warns* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/27/antisemitism-and-holocaust-denial-on-the-rise-in-australia-josh-frydenberg-warns

[24] For example a 20 analysis of online Islamophobia revealed that 51.4% of the online harassments were found to be of a violent nature – expressing, encouraging and facilitating violence Available at: https://www.isra.org.au/site/user-assets/Repeort%201-%20islamophobia-in-australia%20updated%20201920190318150537.pdf

[25] Blakkarly. J (2020) *Why white supremacists and neo Nazis are 'delighted' with the corona virus outbreak* The Guardian, 21 April Available at: https://www.sbs.com.au/news/why-australian-white-supremacists-and-neo-nazis-are-delighted-with-the-coronavirus-outbreak

[26] Executive Council of Australian Jewry (2019) *The ECAJ 2019 Antisemitism Report* Available at: https://www.ecaj.org.au/the-ecaj-2019-antisemitism-report/

[27] Southphommasane. T (2018) *Race politics is back* [Opinion piece] 6 August Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/race-politics-back

[28] Markus, A.B., (2020) *Mapping social cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2020.* ACJC Monash University.

2.5 The Scanlon Report also found that **thirty per cent of Asian born participants reported increased racism during the COVID-19 pandemic**, highlighting the rise in racism against Asian people in Australia due to negative connotations linked to the origins of COVID-19.[29]

2.6 **Violent speech and violent action are connected**.[30] Ideologies that project false and dangerous ideas of biologically or culturally separate races and false narratives about the primacy of the "white nation" threaten the cohesion of Australian society.

Recent examples include:

- A gathering of the far-right National Socialist Network in the Grampians where a cross was burnt (an act linked to the Ku Klux Klan) and overt white supremacist slogans were chanted.
- Multiple attacks on Jewish and Islamic schools and religious buildings.[31]
- The distribution of posters at universities across Melbourne that included anti-Asian slurs and threats to deport Chinese students.[32]
- The distribution of anti-Jewish and anti-homosexual posters, that included disturbing, graphic images.[33]
- Abuse, harassment and intimidation of Jewish and Muslim children (as young as toddlers).[34]
- 368 anti-Semitic incidents- including physical assaults- logged in the 12 months to 30 September 2019 by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, representing a 30 percent increase from the previous year. [35]
- A 107% increase in the number of anti-Semitic graffiti incidents from 2018 to 2019.
- An upsurge in racist incidents against Asian Australians and international students, triggered by racist assumptions that people from China or those who look 'Asian' are to blame for the COVID-19 pandemic.[36]

[29] Ibid.

[30] Australian Human Rights Commission (2017) *How to respond to the upswing in racism* Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/how-respond-upswing-racism

[31] See for example Iner, Derya, ed. (2019) *Islamophobia in Australia Report II (2017-2018). Sydney: Charles Sturt University and ISRA*; Executive Council of Australian Jewry (2019) *The ECAJ 2019 Antisemitism Report* Available at: https://www.ecaj.org.au/the-ecaj-2019-antisemitism-report/

[32] Kwai. I & Xiuzhong Xu. V (2017) *Anti-Chinese posters at Melbourne Universities are tied to white supremacists* The New York Times July 25 Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/world/australia/anti-chinese-posters-melbourne-universities.html

[33] Nathan. J (2018) *The rise of Australia's activist far-right-how far will it go?* The ABC, 31 January Available at: https://www.abc.net.au/religion/the-rise-of-australias-activist-far-right-how-far-will-it-go/10095024

[34] Executive Council of Australian Jewry (2019) *The ECAJ 2019 Antisemitism Report* Available at: https://www.ecaj.org.au/the-ecaj-2019-antisemitism-report/; Iner, D ed. (2017) *Islamophobia in Australia* 2014-2016. Sydney: Charles Sturt University and ISRA

[35] Nathan. J (2020) *Antisemitism in Australia and how to counter it* The Age, February 11 Available at: https://www.abc.net.au/religion/antisemitism-in-australia-and-how-to-counter-it/11953896

[36] The University of Sydney Law School (2020) *Covid-19 and hate crime in Australia* Available at: https://www.sydney.edu.au/law/news-and-events/news/2020/05/07/covid-19-and-hate-crime-in-australia.html

2.6 **Australia lacks a clear and consistent definition of hate crime.** The laws that protect Australians from different forms of hatred are diverse, there are differences between states and territories and people can be reluctant to report hate crimes as they are either unaware of protections under these laws and/or fear retribution from perpetrators as a result of reporting.[37] These gaps have led to a lack of comprehensive data about the incidence of hate crime in Australia.

2.7 **Similarly, gaining reliable data on hate crimes perpetrated by far-right extremists is complicated** by current debate over exactly what constitutes violence motivated by far-right ideology.[38] This is compounded by the lack of any systematic way to track acts of far-right violence in Australia.[39]

2.8 **Racism has significant detrimental impacts on mental health**, and can contribute to feelings of anger, depression, heightened fear, and for young people from refugee backgrounds, flashbacks to trauma experienced prior to arriving in Australia.[40] Multiple studies across Australia report a relationship between racism and health and wellbeing outcomes, and the American Academy of Paediatrics has called racism a "core social determinant of health" and "a driver of health inequities".[41]

2.9 **Racism adds unnecessary costs to the workplace and the economy.** One recent study revealed that the annual cost of racism results in more than 3% of Australia's Gross Domestic Product, adding unnecessary costs to the Australian workplace and economy.[42]

2.10 **Racism works against Australia's goal of building a fair and inclusive society**. By contributing to marginalisation and isolation, racism is a key barrier to social inclusion. Experiences of racism diminish a young person's sense of connection and belonging, and diminishes their participation in education, employment, and recreational activities. [43]

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[37] Mason. G (n.d) *Navigating legislation protecting Australians from all forms of hatred* Available at:
https://tacklinghate.org/trainingmodule/navigating-legislation-a-guide-for-victorian-practitioners-working-on-tackling-hate/
[38] Harris-Hogan. S (2017) *Violent extremism in Australia: an overview* Australian Institute of Criminology Available at:
https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/tandi491.pdf
[39] Ibid.
[40] MYAN (2020) Covid-19 and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds: Policy Platform Available at:
https://myan.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf
[41] Trent, M. Dooley, D.G. and Dougé, J (2019) The impact of racism on child and adolescent health. Pediatrics, 144(2)
[42] Elias. A (2015) Measuring the economic impacts of racial discrimination Available at
http://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30079135/eliasmeasuringthe-2015A.pdf
[43] MYAN (2020) *COVID-19 & Young People from Refugee & Migrant Backgrounds* Available at:
https://myan.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2020/05/myan-policy-platform-2020-26.5.20-final.pdf

3. Politics and the Media

3.1 <u>Dangerous right wing extremist narratives have the ability to influence and infiltrate Australian politics.</u> Across the world, racism and xenophobia are becoming normalised as populist right-wing and extreme far-right discourses become more mainstream[44]. We have seen how anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and anti-immigration rhetoric can become normalised within political systems across the world. It contributes to the normalisation of intolerance, which can then be exploited by far right extremist groups[45]. Examples in Australia include:

- A (now former) Australian Senator calling for a "final solution" to immigration, and a return to "White Australia".[46]
- This same Senator blaming the Christchurch terror attack on Muslim immigration.[47]
- As recently as 2019, the existence of an Australian political party (the now defunct Rise Up Australia) with an overtly Islamophobic agenda and a strong opposition to multiculturalism.
- Claims by an Australian Senator that Australia was being "swamped" by both Asians and Muslims, and that Indigenous Australians are treated "too favourably."[48]
- Senators voting in favour of a motion to condemn 'anti-white racism' and acknowledge the "deplorable rise of anti-white racism and attacks on Western civilisation" and that "It's ok to be white"-sentiments that echo far-right ideology.[49]
- A Senator suggesting physical punishment for a First Nations child who chose not to sing the Australian National Anthem at school.[50]
- A current Senator and former MP agreeing to speak at anti-Muslim rallies in 2016 which were advertised on neo-Nazi website Stormfront.[51]
- Calls by a Senator to instigate a parliamentary inquiry into food label certification focused on halal certification.[52]
- A Senator inviting notorious far right speaker Milos Yiannopoulos to speak at Parliament House in 2017.

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[44] Close. L (2020) *Extremists hiding in plain sight* Australian Strategic Policy Institute available at: https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/right-wing-extremists-hiding-in-plain-sight/

[45] Campion. K (2019) *A "lunatic fringe?" The persistence of right wing extremism in Australia* Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 13 Issue 2.

[46] Karp. P (2018) *Fraser Anning speech 'straight from Goebbels' handbook', says Pauline Hanson* The Guardian, August 15 Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/aug/15/fraser-anning-speech-straight-from-goebbels-handbook-says-pauline-hanson

47 Karp. P (2019) *'Full force of the law' should apply to Fraser Anning after egging incident, Morrison says* The Guardian, March 17 Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/17/full-force-of-the-law-should-apply-to-fraser-anning-after-egging-incident-morrison-says

[48] Iner, D ed. (2017) *Islamophobia in Australia* 2014-2016. Sydney: Charles Sturt University and ISRA.

[49] https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/15/ok-to-be-white-australian-government-senators-condemn-anti-white-racism

[50] Tavan. G Dr (2018) *Aggressive nationalism is on the rise* LaTrobe University Available at: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/aggressive-nationalism-is-on-the-rise

[51] Iner, D ed. (2017) *Islamophobia in Australia* 2014-2016. Sydney: Charles Sturt University and ISRA.

[52] Ibid.

- In 2014, the then Prime Minister of Australia claiming that he wished the burqa was not worn in Australia; that he might support calls for it to be banned in federal parliament.[53]

3.2 **Australia's leaders, including parliamentarians and political leaders, must stand together to oppose racism and racial supremacy and show unity in condemning any signs of extremism and hate speech in Parliament**. Both sides of government must take clear, decisive action in eradicating any trends towards the normalisation of racism, discrimination, prejudice, and hate speech.

3.3 **These narratives are also shared across media platforms.** There are concerns in Australia that dominant sections of the media industry appear to be contributing to the radicalisation of politics in Australia, and giving a platform to extremist, 'far right' ideology. This concern was highlighted by a former Australian Prime Minister whose petition calling for a Royal Commission into media garnered almost half a million signatures.

3.4 **The media has a key role in driving debate about major issues.** [54]Although they are essential communication tools in modern societies, the interaction between online and broadcast media systems adds an additional complexity whereby racist and discriminatory discourses are amplified and broadly disseminated.[55] For example:

- A 2020 study that found that Muslims, Chinese Australians and Indigenous people are the most targeted in racist media coverage in Australia.[56]
- All white panels on television making strong negative generalisations about Indigenous Australians, on topics such as child abuse and the Stolen Generations.[57]
- A popular commentator writing about Australia being swamped by non-English speaking migrants, changing 'our' culture, and referring to "the foreign invasion", "tidal waves of immigrants" and to migrants "colonising" the country.[58]
- Multiple examples of newspaper cartoons promoting offensive racial stereotypes of Indigenous Australians.[59]

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[53] Grattan. M (2017) *Tony Abbott: consider burqa ban in places dedicated to 'Australian values'* The Conversation, 6 September Available at: https://theconversation.com/tony-abbott-consider-burqa-ban-in-places-dedicated-to-australian-values-83590

[54] Australian Human Rights Commission (n.d) *The Racial Hatred Act: the media and racial hatred* Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/racial-hatred-act-media-and-racial-hatred

[55] Lewis, J., Lewis, B., Cameron, R., Pond, P., Ghumkhor, S. and Mohamud, M.H., (2017) *Mediating Extremist Violence: A Report on the Role of Media, Far-Right Politics and Gender in Extremist Violence and Social Cohesion in Victoria*. Melbourne, Vic, Australia: Community Resilience Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

[56] Renaldi. E, Bahamian & Yang. S (2021) *Muslims, Chinese Australians and Indigenous people most targeted in racist media coverage* The Guardian 11 November Available at: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-11/australian-mainstream-media-often-perpetuate-racism-report-finds/12849912

[57] Meade. A (2019) *Sunrise segment on Indigenous adoption lands Seven in more hot water* The Guardian, 14 June Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/jun/14/sunrise-segment-on-indigenous-adoption-lands-seven-in-more-hot-water

[58] Southphommasane. T (2018) *Race politics is back* [Opinion piece] 6 August Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/opinions/race-politics-back

[59] Hurley. A (2019) *Friday essay: it's not funny to us- an Aboriginal perspective on political correctness and humour* The Conversation, 22 February Available at: https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-its-not-funny-to-us-an-aboriginal-perspective-on-political-correctness-and-humour-111535

- An Australian television media outlet hosting the former chairman and founding member of the United Patriots Front (UPF) and the Lads Society who is often referred to as a neo-Nazi and has been found guilty of inciting contempt against Muslims[60]
- Persistent biased reporting perpetuating stereotypes about gangs and crime, which only serves to validate the racist ideology espoused by far right extremist groups in Australia. [61]
- A popular broadcaster being found guilty by the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal "inciting hatred and serious contempt" of Lebanese Muslims due to his on-air comments (and remaining on air post this decision).[62]

4. Multiculturalism: a protective factor against far right extremism

4.1 Australia is one of the most successful multicultural countries in the world, and **cultural diversity has become one of this country's most defining contemporary characteristics.** [63]

4.2 **Support for multiculturalism remains high.** The latest results from the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion found that in 2020, 84 per cent of respondents agreed that multiculturalism has been good for Australia.[64]

4.3 **Investing in social cohesion is vital to achieving this and creating the conditions for a productive society and a stronger sense of safety for everyone living in Australia**. Social cohesion asserts that greater benefits, satisfaction, and security are achieved when community or society 'sticks together', and welcomes diversity, rather than focusing on differences.[65]

4.4 Multiculturalism is a central tenet of Australian national identity and an asset to the country in an era of globalisation. **Any rise in groups whose ideologies are rooted in anti-immigration and racism presents a direct threat to Australia's social fabric.**

4.5 **Social cohesion is vital to creating the conditions for a productive society and a stronger sense of safety for everyone living in Australia.** A safe and welcoming community is crucial for positive settlement outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. However, negative public perception of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants erode the level of cohesion among the Australian community.[66]

[60] Meade. A (2018) *Outcry over Sky News Australia interview with far-right extremist* The Guardian, 6 August Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/aug/06/outcry-sky-news-australia-interview-far-right-extremist-blair-cottrell
[61] Iner, D ed. (2017) *Islamophobia in Australia* 2014-2016. Sydney: Charles Sturt University and ISRA
[62] ABC (2012) *Tribunal rules Alan Jones incited hatred* ABC, 2 October Available: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-10-02/tribunal-rules-alan-jones-incited-hatred/4292052
[63] Rajadurai. E (2018) *Success in Diversity-The Strength of Australia's Multiculturalism* The McKell Institute
[64] Markus, A.B., (2020) *Mapping social cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2020*. ACJC Monash University.
[65] Grossman. M (2020) *Against retrotopia: Young people, social futures and a resilience to extremism* Available at: https://www.crisconsortium.org/cris-commentary/against-retrotopia-young-people-social-futures-and-resilience-to-violent-extremism
[66] MYAN (2020) *Submission to Australia's 2021-22 Migration Program* Available at: www.myan.org.au

4.6 **Debate about immigration and multiculturalism has become increasingly politicised and polarising** in countries like Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. In many of these countries, multiculturalism is not affirmed (and has never been) in any constitutional, legislative or parliamentary instruments. They have, in response, introduced more restrictive immigration and citizenship measures, which contribute to racist and anti-immigration ideologies spouted by far-right extremist groups.[67] We can see the negative impact on social cohesion and the division and discord that these increasingly nationalistic debates and policies are having.

4.7 **Australia, in contrast, is repeatedly recognised internationally and locally as one of the world's most successful examples of a multicultural society. We need to build on this strength.** MYAN does not suggest that culturally diverse societies such as Australia are without complexities however, our multicultural policies should be seen as protective factor against erosion of social cohesion and the division caused by far-right extremist ideology.

4.8 **Many of Australia's social and economic successes can be attributed to our globally recognised policy of multiculturalism.**[68] To continue to benefit from these successes and to protect the cohesiveness of our communities, we cannot allow the doubts and divisions caused by this ideology to take any further root in our communities.

4.9 **In order to continue to maximise Australia's prosperity, multiculturalism must continue to be promoted.** All levels of Australian government must demonstrate renewed support for multiculturalism, reinforced by national policy and funding frameworks.[69]

4.10 **Contemporary discussion about multiculturalism must continue to celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity as a strength.** It must reinforce the success of Australia as a multicultural nation, promoting the principles of mutual respect, equality, and unity and denouncing racial hatred and discrimination as incompatible with Australian society.

5. Recommendations:

In an era of growing alt right extremism and exclusionary nationalistic ideologies, there is an urgent need to broaden the scope of what counts as 'violent extremism'. The Australian Federal

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[67] MYAN (2019) *Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* Available at www.myan.org.au

[68] Rajadurai. E (2018) *Why Australia is the world's most successful multicultural society* The McKell Institute Available at: https://mckellinstitute.org.au/research/articles/why-australia-is-the-worlds-most-successful-multicultural-society/

[69] Ibid.

Government has an important role in responding to the growing problem of far right extremism wherever it presents.

MYAN recommends that the Australian Federal government:

Right wing extremism

1. Invest in an immediate review of Australia's terrorism laws to ensure they are equipped to respond to the threat of right-wing extremism.
2. Take steps to criminalise hate speech in federal law.
3. Develop an Australian Parliamentary Code of Conduct to protect against racist ideas which threaten social cohesion.
4. Embed a national definition of, and response to, hate crimes in Australia.
5. Invest in evidence-based methods to respond to these movements and better understand the prevalence of hate crimes in Australia.
6. Work with media industry bodies, law enforcement, and community groups to develop national guidelines for responsible reporting on immigration, extremism, and particular groups within the Australian community.
7. Take urgent measures to address online radicalisation and right wing extremism propaganda by limiting its appeal, and reducing access to extremist material on-line.
8. Pursue avenues for international information sharing on best practice approaches to the threats and challenges of right wing extremism, and engage with academia to leverage their knowledge and expertise on right wing extremism.

Racism

9. implement a National Anti-Racism Strategy
10. consult with young people on anti-racism initiatives and invest in innovative strategies to combat racism, protect against disengagement and isolation, and build social cohesion, including:
    - an online campaign led by young people and coordinated by MYAN
    - local level, community building activities utilising sports and the arts
    - programs that give all young people the knowledge and support they need to challenge intolerant and extremist attitudes.

11. Take leadership in ensuring that all levels of government support additional efforts to monitor incidents of discrimination and xenophobia and ensure that responses are expedient and well publicised.
12. Establish a code of conduct to ensure that parliamentarians avoid using the COVID-19 pandemic as a foundation for conversations about Australia's immigration program.

Multiculturalism

13. Ensure that all levels of government identify new ways to promote and protect multiculturalism throughout Australia, in recognition that a public policy of multiculturalism underpins the social cohesion of the Australian nation.
14. Ensure that all levels of government avoid misrepresentations and stereotyping of refugee and migrant young people in public narratives and ensure strong leadership to support rather than undermine social cohesion.