

About the Forums

The term “multiculturalism” is heard frequently today in the speeches and writings of politicians, activists, academics, and members of the community. It is used in many different ways and in many different contexts – from a description of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Australian society, to the articulation of policy agendas on immigration, to a demand for the protection of the cultural and religious identities of Australia’s minority communities. Precisely what multiculturalism means, as an idea and as a claim regarding social justice, however, and its implications for the unity and diversity of Australian society remains unclear.

In the wake of the Cronulla riots, and in the aftermath of the recent controversy generated by the comments of many of our federal MPs regarding the multicultural constitution of Australian society, it is critical that the community, the legislature, and the academy come together to discuss the future direction of our diversified society, and to come to a clearer understanding of the nature and implications of multiculturalism, so that fears may be allayed and dangers avoided. Although these issues are widely discussed today by philosophers, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists, the success of the academic enterprise is limited by the tendency to be overwhelmed by “difference”. The intellectual rigor of academics, accompanied by a disposition toward theorizing from the abstract, has led to the separation of the intellectual, political, and social debates from each other. Moreover, the multiculturalism movement has been overrun by public activists speaking for unrepresented religious groups and cultures that may feel threatened in society for political, social, and economic reasons. This isolation of academics, public activists, and the religious and cultural groups is of much concern to the society we live in.

Bringing together leading academics, public policy makers, and community representatives, these forums address the future direction of Australian multiculturalism. How, if at all, is it possible to give adequate recognition to the beliefs of different cultures about justice within the liberal Australian society, without falling victim to a destructive relativism? Do ideas regarding the importance of equality and cultural identity for people demand giving greater recognition to the claims, interests, and values of Australia’s minorities, or do justice and equality demand, in fact, greater unity than ideas of multiculturalism allow?

The Centre for Public Philosophy is a part of the Monash University School of Philosophy and Bioethics, consistently ranked first in its field in Victoria. The Centre offers programs, workshops, forums and seminars designed for members of the professions, school students and the general public.

The purpose of the Centre is three-fold :

- to conduct high quality research into philosophical issues of importance to the public and the professions;
- to disseminate, discuss and debate that research in an accessible manner with groups outside the university community; and
- to provide the conditions and support for the clear, focused examination of ideas and values.

We believe that a healthy society is one in which there are real opportunities for reflection and rational debate. In an increasingly and demanding world the Centre for Public Philosophy seeks to provide these opportunities to everyone.

Centre for Public Philosophy

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Multiculturalism in Perspective: ‘The Academy & the Community’

*A series of Open Public Forums
Hosted by the Centre for Public Philosophy*



State, Society and Community
Jan 20th

Global & National Issues
Feb 3rd

Community, Autonomy, & Respect
Feb 17th

Saturdays, 2-5pm
Melbourne Town Hall
90-120 Swanston St

State, Society, and Community

Saturday January 20th

Waleed Aly, *Islamic Council of Victoria*

Waleed is a commercial lawyer and board member of the Islamic Council of Victoria, the peak representative body for Victorian Muslims. He manages the Council's media operations and is frequently sought for comment from media outlets across Australia on a broad range of issues relating to Islam and Australian Muslims. He has written regularly for mainstream newspapers including *The Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, and was commended at both the Walkley Awards and the Quill Awards for his commentary. He was short-listed this year for the Alfred Deakin Essay Prize in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. Waleed is also a co-host of The Conversation Hour with Jon Faine on 774 ABC Melbourne, and a panelist on *Salam Cafe*, an award-winning community television show screened nationally. Last year, he was a White Ribbon Day Ambassador for the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

George Lekakis, *Victorian Multicultural Commission*

George was appointed Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission on 1 September 2001 by the Bracks Government. He has extensive experience as an advocate for ethnic communities at the local, state and national levels, which is illustrated by his tenure as both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of Victoria's peak multicultural umbrella organisation, the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria. He has had direct experience in delivering and managing a wide variety of services directly to immigrants and refugees for the past 15 years. He was the Director of the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre and the New Hope Foundation, the former being one of the largest Migrant Resource Centres in the nation. He has served on a wide number of government and community based boards, such as the Victorian Industrial Relations Task force, the Community Support Fund Advisory Council, Community Jobs Program Advisory Committee and has also served as a member of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

Michael McGann, *Monash University*

Michael is a PhD student at Monash School of Philosophy & Bioethics and a tutor in ethics and political theory. Michael's research focuses on the relationship between questions of cultural recognition, social solidarity, and the evolving nature of citizenship within the context of liberal theories of justice and human rights. In particular, Michael is studying the interface between community, autonomy, and equality and the tensions involved in reconciling these values with each other in multicultural democracies. Prior to commencing his PhD studies at Monash, Michael completed a B.A. in Politics and Philosophy, and an M.A. in Philosophy at University College Dublin, Ireland.

Multicultural Solidarity: Global & National Issues

Saturday February 3rd

Rev Tim Costello, *World Vision Australia*

Tim studied Law and Education at Monash University and is now one of Australia's leading voices on issues such as urban poverty, homelessness, problem gambling, reconciliation and substance abuse. Tim was ordained a Baptist Minister in 1986 and was elected mayor of St Kilda in 1993. From 1995 - 2003 he was executive director of Urban Seed, a Christian not-for-profit organisation that provides outreach services and hospitality to the city's street people. In 2004 Tim was appointed CEO of World Vision Australia. Tim is a spokesperson for the Interchurch Gambling Taskforce, a member of the National Advisory Body on Gambling and a member of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation. He is the former national president of the Baptist Union of Australia. Tim has also written three books: *Streets of Hope: Finding God in St Kilda*, *Tips from a Travelling Soul Searcher* and *Wanna Bet? Winners and Losers in Gambling's Luck Myth*, co-written with Royce Millar. In recognition of his work, he was a 2000 recipient of the Monash Distinguished Alumni Award and in 2005 he was made Officer of the Order of Australia.

Dr David Burchell, *University of Western Sydney*

David Burchell is a Senior Lecturer in Humanities at the University of Western Sydney. He is the author of *Western Horizon: Sydney's Heartland and the Future of Australian Politics* (Scribe, 2003). He was the co-editor, with Andrew Leigh, of *The Prince's New Clothes: Why do Australians Dislike their Politicians?* (UNSW Press, 2002). For some years the editor of *Australian Left Review*, he currently chairs the board of Australian Universities Review, and is an associate editor at Australian Policy Online. He researches and publishes in areas of public policy, ethics and citizenship, and has a specific research interest in current debates around multiculturalism, religion and ethnicity.

Helen Killmier, *Whitehorse City Council*

Helen Killmier is a community psychologist with a Masters of Applied Psychology (Community) and is currently a PhD candidate. Her interests are in the built environment and its relationship to sense of place, sense of community, participation, health and wellbeing. Helen has worked in local government for ten years. She has worked at the City of Whitehorse for 5 years, as Manager of Community Development. Her position has a strong focus on community wellbeing, social policy and developing sustainable communities. Through her role as Manager of Community Development, Helen has facilitated the development and implementation of a Multicultural Policy and Action Plan at the City of Whitehorse, which has brought a greater participation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the development of local government policy. Helen has also been convenor of the Victorian Local Government Multicultural Issues Network and a member of the Standing Committee on Local Government and Cultural Diversity. She is also involved in many community boards including a Community Legal Service and a Family Support Service.

Community, Autonomy, and Respect

Saturday February 17th

Melba Marginson,

Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition

Melba currently works as a Diversity Planner with the City of Maribyrnong Council and is chairperson of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition which she co-founded in 1997. Melba is also a Director with the Victorian Women's Trust Board Advisor on Immigration for the National Council of Women, Australia (Victoria Chapter) and has served in a number of Ministerial Advisory Committees and Reference Groups on important aspects/issues of women's lives. She continues to advocate for the Filipino community in Australia through her position as national spokesperson of the Centre for Philippine Concerns Australia, which has offices in Melbourne and Brisbane. Melba's advocacy for immigrants and refugees was recognised by the Labor Government in Victoria under Premier Steve Bracks by appointing her as one of the first three Commissioners of the Victorian Multicultural Commission in 2000. She served the Commission for six years. Her achievements on women's issues were recognised when she was selected for the First Women's Honour Roll by the Victorian Government in celebration of Australia's Centenary of Federation in 2001.

Dr Geoffrey Brahm Levey, *University of New South Wales*

Dr Levey is a senior lecturer in politics and international relations at the University of New South Wales and one of Australia's leading theorists of multicultural citizenship. He has wide-ranging interests in political theory, the philosophy of social science, and modern Jewish studies. He was foundation director of the Faculty Program in Jewish Studies 1996-2005 at the University of New South Wales. Prior to taking up this position, Dr Levey taught at Oxford and Brown, and has been a visiting fellow at The International Centre for the University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, Jerusalem and the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol. He has held grants from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (New York), the American Jewish Archives, and the Australian Research Council. Dr Levey's most recent work on multiculturalism is *Secularism, Religion, and Multicultural Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), edited with Tariq Modood. He is also a contributing editor of *Political Theory and Australian Multiculturalism* (New York: Berghahn Books, forthcoming), and with Philip Mendes of *Jews and Australian Politics* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

Fiona Leigh, *Monash University*

Fiona has a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from the University of Melbourne, a Master of Arts from the University of Texas at Austin, and submitted her PhD in August 2006. She has publications in ancient philosophy (Platonic moral psychology) and on the applied ethical question of gay parenting. Fiona has worked as a volunteer for several community organisations, and is currently employed as a full-time Lecturer and Research Fellow in the School of Philosophy and Bioethics at Monash University.