

Working Group on 'Australian Society'
Sydney/Melbourne
23 August 2006
Briefing Note

Preliminary Issues for consideration

What is our vision of Australian society in 20 years?

What are the emerging pressures and challenges on Australian society, whether domestic or international?

Australia prides itself on its heritage of multicultural integration and social cohesion – an inclusive and tolerant society. Are these values under threat? What has promoted social cohesion in the past and what will do so in the future?

What is our sense of national identity? Is it defined? If not, how should it be nurtured in what way?

According to external data, Australia has a high-achieving but low-equity secondary education system. What should be done about this and about schooling and education generally, including what is taught about society – history, civics and so forth?

Indigenous Australia – how should Australia properly address the inequalities of its indigenous population? At the same time, is enough being done to acknowledge success and encourage pride in indigenous achievement?

What is the future of 'community'? The emergence of community-based initiatives and the expansion of sectional interests in the non-government sector - are they a sign of re-engagement or alienation and despair?

How do we see feelings of safety, from crime or community divisions being dealt with? What is the future social capital we are building?

Are we building a culturally vibrant environment in which creativity and ideas blossom? Does it matter?

How do we see the political system evolving, including how we are governed and the relationship between electors and elected?

What are the appropriate roles for business and the private sector, including civil society and community groups, in society? Conversely, what are the responsibilities of citizens and corporations in a globalised world, in terms of duties and obligations to Australia?

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