

Creating an Inclusive Narrative

ROUNDTABLE CONCEPT NOTE



Australian Baha'i Community
Office of External Affairs

Social Cohesion in Australia

In our ever-changing social landscape of increasing diversity, but also growing tribalism and separation, moving forward requires us to refine the fundamental underpinnings framing our national conversation about social cohesion. While current circumstances elicit feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and social isolation, they also provide a valuable opportunity for Australia to consider closely what draws us together.

Australia is an ancient land, a nation of nations shaped by diverse systems of knowledge, traditions, and spirituality. Over the past two centuries, Australia's story has expanded to include migrants, refugees, and those supporting its economy and society. Learning to live harmoniously with diversity has always been a part of our identity. The nation's history is a mix of pride, shame, progress, and setbacks. As its diversity continues to grow, questions about national values and identity arise, offering opportunities to revisit fundamental questions about who we are, where we want to be, and the pathways to get there.

An Ongoing National Conversation

A socially cohesive society works towards the wellbeing of all its members. It promotes inclusion, belonging, and trust, fosters progress through participation and dialogue, and offers everyone the opportunity to flourish and contribute to a just and prosperous society. Social cohesion extends beyond economics and security and encapsulates the full human experience. In the first series of roundtables of the Creating an Inclusive Narrative project conducted in 2019, participants articulated the need for a richer description of social cohesion – one that includes the values, qualities and characteristics around which society can coalesce.

You are invited to build on this conversation in a new series of roundtables to strengthen the narrative of our country— one that continues the story of all that inhabit this land and speaks to who we were and who we want to become by reflecting on:

- What progress has been made in recent years in Australia to promote and strengthen social cohesion? What obstacles have been overcome, and what obstacles remain? What insights and lessons have we learned along the way?
- In recent times, what has influenced and shaped our identity? What conceptions of “us” and “them” are we seeing? How do they come about? Why do they hold significance for us?
- How do we build a sense of common humanity, whilst incorporating the richness of diversity in our country?
- What are the values and norms that strengthen inclusion, belonging and social harmony? What do we want social cohesion and inclusion to look like for future generations?

Consultation

“All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one. Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts. Rather, search diligently for the truth and make all men your friends.”

“No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.”

“Take counsel together on all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.”

Notes
