



Speech by

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CULTURAL EDUCATION

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.14 p.m.): Of our six million postwar migrants, more than four million have come from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Office of Multicultural Affairs should be commended as it provides numerous incentives for groups to promote multiculturalism in the community.

However, those groups typically reach only a certain number of local people—the people who accept the benefits of cultural diversity and the desirability of social cohesion. Their grants provide great outcomes and are effective in informing people about a broad range of cultures. How will we reach the rest of the community—those who need to have a better understanding about people of other cultures to improve their outlook and broaden their awareness?

The key to reaching closed minds is our children, whose perspectives have not been corrupted by prejudice and to whom race and skin colour does not matter. Education should be the focal point whereby the good news about multiculturalism is spread.

The curriculum of most schools contains languages, usually Asian, French and German, which may be useful for a limited time in the space of most people's lives. I suggest that cultural education should start at Year 1 or even in preschool. Our children should be taught the right way as a basis on which they can judge fairly other information that comes their way.

Why can we not include a few minutes of cultural awareness activities in the curriculum every day? Why can we not show our children how wrong it is to have racial prejudices and how right it is to be accepting of other cultures, and encourage them to learn about the ways of other people? Sometimes learning languages is not as important as knowing how to communicate and to understand other cultures. The Government can influence a better understanding of other cultures.
