



Despite considerable public support within Australia for cultural diversity, the national and international contexts since 2001 have heightened anxieties around immigration and social cohesion. This has exacerbated ongoing concerns regarding the lack of clarity about what multiculturalism means, the ways in which multicultural policy is currently managed and its usefulness within 21<sup>st</sup> century nation states. Recent pronouncements by leaders in the UK and Europe question its success yet in Australia the Gillard Government has reaffirmed its commitment to multiculturalism in a new policy statement. Since the multiculturalism of the 1970s, however, the nature of diversity in Australia has changed dramatically with intergenerational change, cultural adaptation, intermarriage, and the widening cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of Australia's immigrants and their children.

Within this context, multicultural education faces questions concerning its relevance, framework and modes of delivery. 'Multicultural education' covers a range of programs – English as a Second Language (ESL), multicultural perspectives in the curriculum, anti-racism initiatives, community languages, community relations, and so on – and draws on diverse rationales – cultural maintenance, social equity, community harmony, cultural awareness. Yet many of these rationales, as with the notion of multiculturalism more generally, need to be rethought.

*Rethinking Multiculturalism /Reassessing Multicultural Education*, an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project conducted jointly by the University of Western Sydney, NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and NSW Institute of Teachers, is undertaking a reassessment of the concepts, practices and goals of multicultural education in order to ensure it can function as an effective and dynamic mechanism for promoting cultural inclusion, social justice and national belonging. As a part of the project, the Centre for Cultural Research (CCR) at the University of Western Sydney will be hosting an International Symposium bringing together national and international scholars in the fields of multicultural education and multiculturalism and senior bureaucrats from education departments across Australia and other relevant national bodies. The goals of the symposium are to:

- survey recent scholarship in these fields from Australia and abroad;
- establish links between local, national and international researchers and government;
- connect the *Rethinking Multiculturalism/Reassessing Multicultural Education* Project to comparable initiatives in Australia and abroad;
- develop future national and international collaborations in this area.

#### **Symposium Presentations**

- International academic invitees are asked to present a 30 minute paper detailing recent research and a brief overview of policy and issues around multicultural education in their country.
- State Education Department invitees are asked to present 20 minute reports providing an overview of multicultural education in their state, recent initiatives and current issues.

**Confirmed speakers include:** Professor Ien Ang - UWS, Professor Handel Wright - University of British Columbia, Professor Mary Kalantzis - University of Illinois, Professor Stephen May - University of Auckland, Professor Georgina Tsolidis - University of Ballarat, Dr Richard Race - Roehampton University.

#### **Rethinking Multiculturalism/Reassessing Multicultural Education Project Investigators**

**University of Western Sydney** - Dr Megan Watkins, CCR, Assoc. Professor Greg Noble, CCR, Professor Kevin Dunn, School of Social Sciences. **NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit** - Amanda Bourke, Nell Lynes. **NSW Institute of Teachers** - Robyn Mamouney