

## THEME 5: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT

### SUMMARY

- The phrase **'love it or leave it'** has featured often in Australian public discussions and have been used as a way to alienate minority groups **often making valid criticisms about aspects of Australian culture and policy**
- Australian values have long been a **weapon to exclude** refugees from entering the country
- Australian values have often been quite **vaguely defined and express universal aspirations** such as **'egalitarianism'** and **'responsibility'**. It is arbitrary to discriminate on the basis of these values and we must look deeper into how these values are used as a political tool
- Australia's multicultural history must be **appreciated to understand what true Australian values look like** and what individuals can realistically be accounted for
- The **current discourse needs to change as it excludes and marginalises entire minorities** and has compounded existing oppression such as Islamophobia and more

### SETTING THE SCENE: "OUR VALUES" AT RISK?

- Currently, visitors and new residents to Australia need to read through an **"Australian values statement"** from the 'Life in Australia Book' as published on the Home Affairs Website.
- This approach recalls a **history of anxiety within mainstream Australian discourse** around a belligerent and backward immigrant
- Another aspect of the drive to a homogenous set of Australian values and identity is to serve the function of reassuring "real" Australians that their way of life is safe from **terrorists, queue jumpers and men who don't respect women.**
- It is fundamentally undemocratic to assert that minorities should simply leave the country if they do not comply with the majority of the populace



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## WHAT ARE AUSTRALIAN VALUES BEYOND THE HEADLINES?

- Values such as 'egalitarianism' and 'responsibility' are **extremely broad and almost esoteric concepts**. Given most humans across the globe would attest to the need for equality and treating people well, it is strange that these values are enshrined in policy
- Australia has a fundamentally multicultural makeup: **One in four** of Australia's 22 million people were born overseas, **46%** with at least one parent born overseas and nearly **20 per cent** of Australians speak a language other than English at home.
- Australia has a history of immigration **which indicates that a homogenous Australian 'culture' has not existed historically**. Australian culture, and by extension its values, has always been a mosaic of **different cultures** and **ways of thinking**.
- Holding individuals account to Australian values **only takes place with respect to immigrants**. White Australia has never been accounted for not complying with this set of abstract values.

## THE NEED FOR CHANGE: MOVING BEYOND A POLARISING DISCOURSE

- **The national conversation as of late has instead been characterised by polarisation and misinformation**. Tropes of a values affirming native citizen has been placed in contest with the image of a 'shady migrant' seeking to quietly import their own country's values into Australia.
- There have been **significant racialised tragedies** that have hit Australian society and neighbouring countries in recent times that recall this social conflict arising from a clash of cultures.
- we need to ask ourselves about the **type of language and labels** that are being used in the media and various political actors which have the effect of marginalising entire groups due to a perceived lack of 'Australian values' and thereby a sense of foreignness.

## CONCLUSION: MOVING TOWARDS RESPECT FOR ALL

- it is clear that the existing polarising discourse has **had wide ranging impacts on immigrants and has fundamentally shaped their experience** in living in Australia.
- Key minority groups have struggled to contribute in meaningful ways to any national conversation if they disagree with mainstream opinion.
- The national conversation **should move beyond the 'clash of values' narrative** and take the multicultural nature of Australian society more seriously. Minorities and immigrants have never tried to seriously upend the 'Australian way of life' but have simply **asked for respect**