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978-0-521-70943-9 - Social Cohesion in Australia
James Jupp and John Nieuwenhuysen
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Introduction

John Nieuwenhuysen

There are many features of a society that can undermine its cohesiveness. These include the distribution of income, wealth, employment and opportunity, as well as access to services, voting rights or citizenship among various segments of the population. This book is, however, concerned with one principal question: how can Australia, with its considerable cultural diversity and continuing high (permanent and temporary) immigrant intake, remain socially cohesive? The volume is by no means encyclopaedic. But it covers, with contributions by 16 authors, an important series of aspects of several of the perceived indicators of social cohesiveness in Australia.

Part I surveys the historical quest for harmony in Australia, and the conditions and possible means of measuring social cohesion, as well as current federal government initiatives to attain it. The chapters in Part II consider the landmark of Cronulla; ethnically based youth groups; religious resurgence and diversity; Indigenous Australia, and aspects of cultural fragility; and educational attainment and inter-ethnic marriage. Part III covers unions and the workplace; education; the media; sport; terrorism and politics; and human rights.

The book concentrates on immigration, which has been a central part of Australia's history since first European settlement in 1788. It has been at the heart of the creation of a dynamic society and has helped economic growth. Much of immigration's success has depended on the absence of marked social conflict and division through the arrival from overseas, in peaks and troughs, of so many millions of people from extremely diverse backgrounds.

Current (2007) immigration intakes under the planned program are at their highest levels in 20 years. They are expected to rise substantially in the near future, and are exceeded by even greater numbers of temporary arrivals. As in previous years, immigration policy remains controversial. But public opinion polling has seldom indicated that it is a major issue, ranking it as of very secondary importance in the public mind relative to the economy, employment, health and education.

But there are two special features in the current debate which mark a turning point from the past. The first is an ever more rapidly globalising world which includes a much freer movement of people. The second is the violent attacks on civilians in different countries, in response to which a 'war on terror' has been joined by the Australian government. Security and other legislation have ensued, casting suspicion on the Muslim community (which numbers 300 000, of which one-third are locally born). Riots in the Sydney suburb of Cronulla in December 2005 unleashed scenes which shocked Australia. This led to much

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activity by governments and Muslim and other community leaders, engendering public discussion and plans to alter federal government multicultural policies. It is in this context that the book is set.

There are variations in the conception of social cohesion among the different authors from the perspective of several disciplines. Consequently, the editors have left it to them, within a broad frame, to apply these conceptions of social cohesion, and how it can be maintained or undermined, to their analyses. Nonetheless, there are many shared aspects of the definitions used. These derive mainly from the idea that social cohesion reflects the strength of shared values, a sense of common identity and of belonging to the same community. Khoo (chapter 10) points out that recent work in Western societies suggests five dimensions of social cohesion: belonging (shared values, identity, commitment); inclusion (equal opportunities for access); participation (engagement in structures and systems); recognition (respect and tolerance); and legitimacy (pluralism). Each of these, as well as those mentioned by Jupp, appears in the various chapters of the book.

Overall, the editors have adopted Jenson's (1998a,b) conclusion that 'there is no single way of even defining [social cohesion]. Meanings depend on the problem being addressed and who is speaking'.

In chapter 1, James Jupp notes that Australia is among the most cohesive and harmonious societies on earth, one based on 'stable institutions, high living standards, economic expansion and isolation from zones of conflict'. Why then, he asks, is there so much anxiety about social cohesion? While much of the debate about serious divisions resulting from multiculturalism is 'quite hysterical', there remain problems in the area of social justice and equality. He gives a substantial list of the means by which social cohesion is maintained, including a sound economy with equitable distribution of goods and services; a basic stock of values and traditions; and a high level of trust between citizens and authorities.

In chapter 2, Andrew Markus and Liudmila Kirpitchenko provide Canadian, British and other definitions of social cohesion. The Canadian quotations emphasise that social and community cohesion is a 'set of processes', which entail instilling in individuals a sense of belonging and recognition. The British examples view a cohesive community as possessing a common vision, with the diversity of the backgrounds of its members being positively valued and the provision of equal opportunities for all in society.

In chapter 3, Nick Economou notes that observers have some facility in providing varying definitions of social cohesion and saying how it might be assessed. But they are 'much better at identifying those moments where social cohesion breaks down'. After reviewing different approaches to social cohesion and its definitions in Europe, North America and elsewhere, he draws attention to 'the potential for the notion of "social cohesion" to be contentious and value-laden, particularly where analysts seek to quantify the extent to which there are shared values within a community'. He illustrates this by citing ambivalent attitudes to linguistic diversity: viewed positively by multiculturalists but negatively by assimilationists. He provides a brief review of the different ways of measuring social cohesion. The difficulty of defining social cohesion is reflected in the complexities of the means of measurement that he outlines. The concept of social cohesion is value-laden and so is the task of finding adequate measuring rods.

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Nonetheless, it is an important task and is part of the Scanlon Social Cohesion Research initiative, of which this book is one project.

Concluding Part I, chapter 4 is an outline of the Commonwealth's policies and approaches to creating a socially cohesive and economically thriving country under a planned long-term immigration program. Presented by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, this paper gives a very positive view of migration to Australia and its consequence for society and the economy. It celebrates Australia's success in integrating people from many nations and cultures around the world – 'respecting people's differences and providing opportunities for everyone to belong and participate as full members' – and lists several factors that contribute to this social cohesion.

Part II commences in chapter 5 with Jock Collins' analysis of inter- and intra-ethnic conlict, a commonly used indicator of the degree of divisiveness in communities. He uses overseas experience as a lens through which the riots at Sydney's Cronulla beach in December 2005 can be viewed, and set in proper perspective. While not denying the ugliness of the riots, he highlights their more extreme, sustained and violent counterparts in other eras and countries. He also details desirable policy responses to the riots, including jobs, education, urban renewal, public housing and space, more sensitive and less sensational media coverage, and community relations. He concludes that the Cronulla riots were 'an expression of ethnic tensions in one of the world's most cosmopolitan cities'.

In chapter 6, Rob White deals with one of the most important aspects of social cohesion and its maintenance in Australia: the transformation of social difference into social deviance, where people who have grown up here are vilified as outsiders. The response of many of these people is to affirm their social presence by joining a gang. Three intervention issues are identified: perceptions that youth gangs are a danger to the community generate action from police, irrespective of what is happening at the grassroots level; political and economic conditions for potential growth in gang-related activity do exist, and need to be forestalled; most discussions of gangs have been racialised, with ethnic minority youth the main subject of attention.

In chapter 7, Gary Bouma and Rod Ling note that the global movement of ideas, people and capital has accompanied religious renewal, and altered the flow of influences in religion from north to south to the opposite direction. Numbers of religious groups have been increasing as well as their diversity, and include a growing variety of uncontrolled and less organised forms of religious life. The previous policies for managing this diversity are under challenge, demanding new sensitivities to gauge whether religion helps create or diminish social cohesion. For this challenge, it is critical to distinguish between revitalising and radicalising influences in religious activity.

In chapter 8, Tim Rowse suggests that the way in which people in Australia view cohesion between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations will be affected by how they think about cohesion within Indigenous Australia. Indigenous Australians have the double challenge of how to live within a country where they are disadvantaged, and how to live with each other. Of special importance are the views of Noel Pearson that Indigenous people have been 'poisoned' by their access to welfare benefits.

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Closely related to Rowse's work is Robert Nelson's chapter 9, where he discusses the relationship between arts and social cohesion by alluding to the uniformist impact of globalisation, where people of diverse background are brought together. He notes Australia's success as a cohesive peaceful multicultural society, but adds that this 'miraculous peaceful multicultural existence' has been bought at the expense of Indigenous Australians. He makes an impassioned attack on globalisation, which 'entails a new persistence of persuasive commercial language, in which ownership of the ideal way to be, look, think, and aspire, inheres in foreign places; and meanwhile the old local and natural modes of deportment are expropriated, deemed unfashionable, redundant, backward and embarrassing'.

In chapter 10, two other important and well-established indicators of Australian social cohesion – educational attainment and inter-ethnic marriage – are reviewed by Siew-Ean Khoo. Education is seen as contributing to social inclusiveness through provision of greater human capital, enabling increased economic participation and integration. Inter-ethnic marriage is also regarded as one of the most definitive indicators of immigrant integration into the local community, since 'it is seen as the outcome of close social interaction between people of different communities'. Khoo reaches encouraging conclusions for the future of social cohesion in Australia on both counts: statistical evidence shows that levels of educational attainment are higher in young than adult migrant generations, and implies greater engagement with the general community; and there is also clear evidence that migrants in the second generation are more likely than their parents were to marry outside their own ethnic group. And the third generation, as Australian-born children of Australian-born parents, is even less likely to maintain the ethnic culture of their grandparents.

Part III deals with the influences and responses in searching for social cohesion in Australia. In chapter 11, on employment and the unions, Santina Bertone emphasises that employment is even more important for new arrivals to a country than to longer established residents, otherwise they become marginalised. Her analysis reveals some growing pressure points in the Australian labour market which threaten social cohesion: the disproportionate representation of workers of non-English-speaking background in the lower jobs, and the baneful impact on these people of federal industrial relations legislation. These, together with anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric, point towards future social unrest and friction.

In chapter 12, Hurriyet Babacan cites Durkheim's observation that society depends for its existence on 'a sufficient degree of homogeneity. Education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands'. However, she notes that both the definition and measurement of social cohesion in the context of education's contribution to it are problematic. This is partly because education's impact on social cohesion 'may well be greatly outweighed by more powerful institutional and cultural factors at the national level'. She notes the major challenges confronting education in its relationship with social cohesion. These are both micro issues such as cultures, languages and experiences of students and their families, and macro issues such as racial stratification and inequality.

Andrew Jakubowicz's chapter 13 notes the position of the media in providing avenues for debate and negotiation in complex societies; in fact 'the media are the

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primary machinery in the promotion of both social cohesion and social conflict'. In reviewing the evidence, and using Cronulla as a part case study, he concludes that there is a need to view the media's overall effect on social cohesion with considerable discernment.

In chapter 14, Brett Hutchins notes a lack of critical perspective infusing much popular writing about sport, which is 'a social activity that divides as much as it unites'. In recollecting and celebrating past sporting feats, it is often forgotten that many sports have blemished records of appealing to those of non-English-speaking backgrounds, Indigenous competitors, and women. There is a need 'to reframe the problem of sport and social cohesion'. It is unrealistic to suppose that sport can somehow 'fix social problems or transcend cultural divides'.

Jenny Hocking in chapter 15 trenchantly outlines new security legislation and its impact on inter-ethnic relations. Since September 11, 2001, the federal government has passed more than 30 pieces of legislation to combat acts of terrorism, and the agencies of state concerned with security have received dramatic increases in powers and resources, creating an 'effective second tier of quasi-judicial process outside the established criminal justice system and free of key legal protections'. She points to several aspects of the new security regime, among them Executive proscription powers, which have, in their selective application, disturbing implications for inter-ethnic relations. In concluding, she notes the irony of Australia's imitation of overseas anti-terrorist legislation, quoting Malcolm Fraser: 'The country that has most successfully handled multicultural issues over the last 50 years is to go down a track, practised by countries that have handled these same issues less well and with less harmony.'

Finally, in chapter 16, Gabrielle McKinnon asks, would a bill of rights enhance social cohesion in Australia? Australia is the only Western democratic nation which remains reluctant to make human rights enforceable through a domestic bill of rights. Opponents argue that any legislative protection of human rights of individuals over the community as a whole would erode the cohesiveness of Australian society. She reviews the possibility that an Australian bill of rights could assist social cohesion by providing a set of common values relevant to a multicultural society and a mechanism for mediating conflict between competing interests within the community.

The essays in this book describe a mixture of the overall success of the immigration program over recent decades, under multicultural policies, and some problematic questions for the future. Australia's cosmopolitanism has grown apace but without some of the problems (for example ghettoisation) experienced in other immigrant-receiving societies. The inflow of people to Australia has been supported by settlement services, in particular English language training facilities, which have assisted employment opportunities and economic mobility for new arrivals. And on some key indicators of social cohesion, for example greater community engagement of young second-generation migrant groups, the omens are good.

Nonetheless, several question marks are raised by the various authors: issues of marginalisation of the overseas-born in the workforce; the consequences of security legislation for inter-ethnic relations; the media's proclivity to devalue minorities who appear not to conform to core cultures; the social estrangement

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and exclusion of Indigenous people from the prosperity and degree of economic participation of the broader population; the difficulties which some mainstream religious organisations and the population generally have in coming to terms with new, less familiar groupings, and the reduced capacity of older religious structure to deliver social cohesion; and the feelings of marginalisation and alienation among young people, in the face of hostility and vilification, which leads them to affirm their social presence and validate their lives by joining a gang.

As in other countries, such as Britain, one of the major new challenges to social cohesion policies in Australia is a greater and deeper diversity among new residents. Sometimes that greater diversity, as part of a globalised world, means that imported tensions are being reflected in Australian public places. Among these are the consequences for inter-ethnic relations of security legislation designed to prevent in Australia the violent terrorist attacks which have occurred in overseas countries, such as the United States, Britain, Spain and Indonesia. For some communities in Australia, life has started to feel different since the attacks in New York in 2001 and their successors in London, Madrid and Bali.

At the same time, some resident Australians question alleged 'special treatment' for immigrants, and develop resentment and grievance.

In this, there is a remarkable similarity between the Australian scene and that elsewhere, for example Britain. The British Parliamentary Secretary for Communities, Ruth Kelly, could have been speaking of Australia when she said:

> The issue became a catalyst for a debate about who we are and what we are as a country. About what it means to live in a town where the faces you see on the way to the supermarket have changed and may be constantly changing. I believe this is why we have moved from a period of uniform consensus on the value of multiculturalism, to one where we can encourage that debate by questioning whether it is encouraging separateness. (Speech at launch of Commission on Integration and Cohesion, London, 28 August 2006.)

Echoing this in political theory are several voices, including Francis Fukuyama, who considers that the 'old multicultural model' of countries such as the Netherlands and Britain needs to be replaced since, out of a 'misplaced sense of respect for cultural difference', it 'ceded too much authority to cultural communities to define rules'. But, he adds, liberal societies have their own values and 'cultures that do not accept these premises do not deserve equal protection'.

In international and Australian debate basic questions are being asked. The Australian government for its part has formally distanced itself from the long-established era of multiculturalism. After showing distaste for the word 'multiculturalism' over its first ten years of office, the Howard government has changed the name of the former Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). State governments in Australia are unlikely at present to follow this example. But the Australian government's move makes the messages of this book especially topical and important. They stress the success of Australia's past. But caution and care are necessary lest the bases of that success are neglected by all the various governments, agencies and communities concerned in coming to terms with the fresh challenges of today and tomorrow.

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PART I
DEFINING, MEASURING AND SEEKING SOCIAL COHESION

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The quest for harmony

James Jupp

Australia is among the most cohesive and harmonious societies on earth, based on stable institutions, high living standards, economic expansion and isolation from zones of conflict. Since 1788 it has never had a revolution, never been invaded, and no public figure has been assassinated. Since 1860 it has regularly changed its governments through the ballot box. It extended the franchise to women well before Britain or the United States. Its industrial relations have been regulated by law for a century. Its police and politicians, though not perfect, are less corrupt than in many other developed societies. Its darkest shadow is cast by the failure to secure equality for its Indigenous minority, but that has also proved intractable elsewhere. Australia has no external colonies and relinquished its last possession, in Papua New Guinea, in 1975. It has developed a stronger sense of national identity than in the past, when many saw it as a British society.

Why then has there been so much anxiety expressed about social cohesion – now and in the past? Will this relatively benign condition continue? And what exceptions and problems remain? Since Sir Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in 1516, authors have been depicting ideal societies. But all are imaginary and none corresponds to the realities of a society like Australia. At the most elementary level a cohesive society is one that does not fall apart into what Geoffrey Blainey called ‘a nation of warring tribes’. He saw this as the end product of multiculturalism, which stressed cultural variety. However, very few modern industrial societies have fallen apart without being involved in major wars or invasions. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia certainly fell apart, but they had been kept together by authoritarian governments with low levels of economic well-being. Australia is certainly not Yugoslavia, although some critics of multiculturalism claimed it as proving that ‘multiculturalism does not work’. While poor multicultural societies are often divided and even chaotic, rich ones like Switzerland and Singapore do very well. Cultural uniformity seems less important in sustaining a cohesive society than does economic success (Kymlicka & Norman 2000).

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The mainstream of American political science, associated with Robert Dahl (1984), held that modern societies involved a plurality of groups held together by constant interaction and compromise within a stable set of institutions and laws. This applies to ethnic and religious groups as well as to the more obvious economic interests. Later modifications point out that some elements in this mix are much more powerful than others. Pluralism also belittles the central role of the state, which is confined to regulating conflicting interests. In the Australian system, with its rigid party discipline and organised economic interests, many may be left out of access to power. Societies may be cohesive, but not always fair or inclusive. Nor are all citizens actively engaged in political life.

Inequalities do not necessarily make society less cohesive unless the poor and weak rebel, which is affluent societies they rarely do. Compulsory voting in Australia makes it likely that they will be taken into account to a greater extent than in other democracies. With the decline in recruitment to parties and trade unions, however, an important social element becomes weaker. This may be replaced by organised religion, or, as in the United States, by organised ethnicity or 'identity politics' (Stokes 1997). This only threatens social cohesion if ethnic minorities are concentrated in a geographical area, seriously disadvantaged or in substantial numbers, which does not hold true for Australia (Joppke 1999).

Notions of justice, charity and care are as old as notions of social harmony and cohesion. They have not yet died under the heat of economic rationalism. Concern for Aborigines is morally based on the notion that all Australians are entitled to equal life chances and pragmatically based on the costs arising from social dislocation. The same is true for the disabled, the elderly, marginal farmers, the unemployed, refugees and many others. But a society which ignores such elements might still be cohesive and economically viable. Social protection varies between societies but does not disappear altogether.

Recently, Robert Putnam (2000) has seen social cohesion as dependent on a multiplicity of 'bridging' groups which interact with others. These contrast with 'bonding' groups which may create minority solidarity without helping to consolidate society. Critics argue that some religious and ethnic groups do create barriers between themselves and others. But often the imperatives of working and living together and gradual assimilation make these barriers less rigid. It is this declining rigidity that many see as necessary for social integration in multicultural societies. Two problems in applying this scheme to reality are that many citizens are members of a variety of groups, some of which may compete with others, while many citizens are not actively engaged with any organised groups at all. Moreover, some religious groups may bond their members together while still bridging gaps by working with others and through established institutions.

Social cohesion is maintained by a sound economy which distributes goods and services equitably (but not equally); which negotiates different interests and pressures through a generally accepted network of laws and institutions; which is protected against hostile forces from without and within; which has a basic, but not exclusive, stock of values and traditions; which resolves political issues without violence; which develops and extends the individual and collective rights of its citizens; where citizens have equal civil and human rights; where governments manage society within a concept of the common good; and where there is a high level of trust between citizens and the authorities. Such

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societies are not all the same and not all possess these characteristics in equal measure. There are very few utopias in the world. Many societies maintain cohesion through coercion, with the authorities becoming corrupt and vicious as a result. Australia has become more coercive in response to the fear of terrorism, but this is still in its early stages.

Australia and the good society

Stability and the good society have been the central concerns of political theory in all the major philosophical schools for at least 2500 years – both in Europe and in Asia – namely Western (originating with the Greeks), Islamic, Catholic, Chinese and Indian. While these schools were doubtless unknown to the convicts and soldiers who first settled in 1788, many of the early colonial administrators had a classical education and were familiar at least with the Western European inheritance. Australia was first settled during the American and French revolutions, when such issues were widely debated and disputed. Moreover, some of the colonial and political leaders were also aware of discussions within the British Empire about the principles of 'peace, order and good government' and the need for more liberal institutions.

While overlapping and without strict boundaries, the major schools of debate about stable and just societies in Australia follow roughly in the sequence: Social Order; Social Cohesion; Social Harmony; and Social Justice. The end result, so far, has been an orderly, cohesive, harmonious and just society by world standards. While human progress is often looked on as a myth, in Australia each epoch has been better than the one before in terms of material wealth, human relationships and living standards (Galligan & Roberts 2004).

Social order

Concern with social order was usually conservative, hierarchical and afraid of anarchy and democracy. Those familiar with Plato's *Republic* would certainly have come across these aspects at English public schools or universities. Machiavelli has passed into popular recognition as an advocate of the 'whatever it takes' school for preserving order, with the 'prince' manipulating society (Crick 1969). Hobbes was not as popular as he later became with academics, but he was also deeply concerned with the chaos he saw created by the English civil wars of the mid-17th century, another period well known to the educated Englishman (Hobbes 1651/1976). Those who established a new society based on transported convicts were obviously going to be concerned with social order. Many leaders of Australian opinion prior to 1850 were opposed to democracy. They sought to re-create the hierarchical society of aristocratic England and Scotland. But the ending of the convict system and the arrival of liberal-minded immigrants and administrators undermined these attitudes and laid the foundations for representative institutions. Wentworth's 'bunyip aristocracy' was laughed out of court and manhood suffrage was adopted a generation before the United Kingdom. Social

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