Key questions for the Scanlon Social Cohesion Research Project

Australia has operated over the last 50 years a highly successful immigration program. This has absorbed millions of people in successive waves from a great diversity of backgrounds. It has done so without major threat to social cohesion or interethnic stability.

At present, the inflow of permanent settlers (in addition to ever growing temporary migration) is at one of the three highest levels in the post-war period. The shortage of skills in Australia is likely, moreover, to encourage the Federal Government to increase this intake even further.

One simple question which arises from this is: can Australia over coming years repeat the immigration with social cohesion success story of the last five decades?

In order to try to answer this question, research on several interconnected issues is needed:

What does the "map" of settlers to Australia look like? What are the components and indicators of a socially cohesive Australian society? Can the country's record in fulfilling the necessary attributes for social cohesion

be measured? What are the best ways of constructively ensuring social cohesion in Australia? And, looking at international comparisons, how can nations receiving immigration guard against the possibility that new groups in society may create disruption?

Scanlon Social Cohesion Research Initiatives

To examine these issues, a major research initiative on social cohesion in Australian and other societies has begun. The Social Cohesion Research Program has been generously funded by the Scanlon Foundation, and is being undertaken by Monash University researchers in association with scholars from elsewhere, including ANU and Chatham House in London.

This vital project will be launched at the 12th International Metropolis Conference in Melbourne, 8 to 12 October 2007.

Metropolis 2007

Migration, Economic Growth and Social Cohesion

In October 2007, the prestigious Metropolis conference will be held in Melbourne – the first time it has been hosted by a city in the Southern Hemisphere.

It will be an event of major importance, featuring Australian and global leaders and thinkers, renowned academics and key stakeholders who will gather to examine key issues in migration today.

Metropolis 2007 is being organised by the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements at Monash University and the Australian Multicultural Foundation, in collaboration with the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, and the City of Melbourne.

![METROPOLIS logo]

Social Cohesion Research Program

The Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion Research Program

▌ A major new research initiative on social cohesion in Australian and other societies

▌ Funded by the Scanlon Foundation

▌ To be launched at 12th International Metropolis Conference in Melbourne, 8 to 12 October 2007.

Monash Institute for the Study of Study of Global Movements

Established in 2003, the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements aims to increase Monash University's research profile through the study of diverse issues concerning the international movement of people. It helps Monash scholars extend their networks locally and internationally, create new partnerships across disciplines, and gain further funding for their work. Over the past three years, the number of publications and conferences, the quality of the new research, the volume of the output, and the enhancements to Monash's position attest to Institute's success in these areas.

The Scanlon Foundation

In June 2001, the Scanlon family established a Foundation with a mission to support the creation of a larger, cohesive Australian society. Much of Australia's prosperity and culture is a consequence of a large proportion of migrant settlers. For Australia to maintain its vibrance and prosperity it will continue to rely on significant levels of immigration. However, the Scanlon Foundation believes this will only be possible if there is an environment of social cohesion and that such cohesion requires continual vigilance, knowledge and effort.

Australian Multicultural Foundation

The Australian Multicultural Foundation was established in 1987 to cultivate in all Australians a strong commitment to Australia as one people drawn from many cultures and by so doing, advance our social and economic well-being; promote awareness of the diversity of cultures within Australia and the contribution of its peoples in the development of Australia; and encourage the spread of respect and understanding among its diverse communities. The Foundation pursues these objectives by adopting issues of national significance and by initiating programs in partnerships in worthwhile fields and activities.

Australia enjoys a diverse and connected community. This project will help us understand the factors that have contributed to social cohesion in this country. Monash is extremely pleased to collaborate with the Scanlon Foundation on this vital research.

PROFESSOR RICHARD LARKINS AO
Vice-Chancellor and President, Monash University

We are proud to be associated with this exciting research project that brings together Australia's key thinkers and academics. This project will play a crucial role in shaping the country in the years ahead.

PETER SCANLON
Chair, Scanlon Foundation

It is indeed a significant occasion when the private sector, a not-for-profit organisation and an academic institute come together to work on a research project of major proportions, with outcomes to benefit Australian society for years to come.

THE HON SIR JAMES GOBBO AC CVO
Chair, Australian Multicultural Foundation

The Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion Research Program

THE SCANLON PROJECTS

This major research initiative will be undertaken by Monash researchers in association with scholars from elsewhere, including Chatham House in London, in the following segments:

Project 1: Mapping of Settler Pattern in Australia.

Led by Dr Nick Economou, of Monash University, this project will map and identify the Australian population down to Local Government Area [LGA] level by country of birth, language spoken at home, religion, and ancestry. It will provide the framework for survey sampling purposes and a basis for obtaining material to assist testing of social cohesion determinants hypotheses. Linked to Projects 2, 3 and 4, the expertise and data collection of the Monash Centre for Urban Population Research will be employed for this part of the interconnected study segments.

Project 2: Components of Social Cohesion.

In the context of recent Australian debates concerning immigration and social cohesion, there is an urgent need to define the concept of social cohesion and develop a framework of key indicators or components of settlement outcomes and cohesion. This project, led by Professor Andrew Marcus, and Dr Michael Ure, of Monash University, will adapt and apply these concepts and frameworks to broaden understanding of the nature and current state of social cohesion in Australia, and develop a set of indicators that can identify and track changes in the impact of immigration.

Project 3: Attitudinal Survey Design.

Under the direction of Dr Nick Economou, of Monash University, this project involves two distinct parts: based on the results of Projects 1 and 2: (i) a qualitative stage with a cross section of people and locations selected as most likely to contribute to understanding attitudinal determinants of social cohesion; and (ii) design of a questionnaire format to measure attitudes to social cohesion. Project 3 is linked to Project 1 which identifies areas with significant cohorts of community types most likely to test the boundaries of social cohesion and community harmony. It is also linked to Project 2, which will provide key components/indices of social cohesion for qualitative elaboration and results of qualitative interviews from Monash's Springvale Community survey work.

Project 4: Benchmark Survey of Attitudes to Social Cohesion.

The project includes the pre testing of questions and pilot testing of the questionnaire to be administered in the benchmark survey of attitudes to social cohesion. It will be based on a national representative sample of the Australian population and is intended to provide the first comprehensive measure of the condition of social cohesion in Australia. Also supervised by Dr Nick Economou, and under the auspices of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, an independent survey firm will be commissioned to undertake the detailed survey.

Project 5: Constructively Attaining Social Cohesion in Australia.

Building on other parts of the Scanlon Foundation's Social Cohesion Research Program, in particular Project 2 (Components of Social Cohesion) this work involves the compilation of an edited volume entitled "Constructively Attaining Social Cohesion in Australia". The object of the publication is to define and analyse the means by which social cohesion in Australia can be constructively strengthened (and, by implication, the current threats to social cohesion countered). The publication will be edited by Professor John Nieuwenhuysen, Hass Dellal and Dr James Jupp, and will include contributors from a range of Australian scholars and researchers with expertise in their field.

Project 6: Minorities in Australian and International Societies.

This project, under the guidance of Dr David Wright-Neville, of Monash University, and Drs Bobo Lo and Nadim Shehadi of Chatham House, London, arises from the danger that new arrivals in a country may undertake acts of political violence. The implications for high level, widely sourced immigration programs, are obvious: the threat of violence potentially disrupts social cohesion, the willingness of the host population to countenance continuing inflows of people from abroad, especially from activist countries, becomes increasingly compromised. The rationale for this project is that the lessons learned elsewhere and the comparative policies adopted are relevant to the future of Australia's immigration, settlement and social cohesion policies.