



# NIE IN HARMONY

WHAT makes each of us unique? What do we have in common? These are the questions that we are going to explore together to learn how we can live in harmony.

**"We are one  
But we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we**

**come.  
We share a dream  
And sing with one voice  
I am, you are, we are  
Australians."**

(Lyrics form song I am Australian, by Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton 1987)

## THE FACTS

- ▶ Around 45% of Australians were born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas.
- ▶ People from more than 200 countries make up Australian communities.
- ▶ More than 300 languages are spoken in Australia.
- ▶ 95% of the population are Australian citizens.
- ▶ Australia is ranked 18th in the world in terms of net migration per capita (2008 data nationmaster.com)

## HARMONY DAY

EVERY year on March 21, Harmony Day is recognised nationally as part of a Commonwealth Government initiative. Since 1999, it has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the benefits of living in a culturally diverse society. The message Everyone Belongs hopes to emphasise the

importance of justice, equity, fairness and friendship. The day encourages us to show respect for all community members regardless of their background, and to remember there is no place for intolerance. Orange ribbons are worn as a symbol recognising the importance of community harmony.

## DIVERSITY

INDIGENOUS Australians have been here for at least 40 thousand years but during the past two centuries people have come from all around the world to live in Australia. Therefore it is not unusual to meet people of different races, ethnic backgrounds or cultural groups living in our communities.

The 21 million people who call Australia home today have a range of backgrounds, circumstances, needs and preferences. Diversity is the variety of characteristics that makes each individual different. Examples of these characteristics include race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, culture, age, physical ability as well as religious, political and other beliefs.

Unfortunately some people find it difficult to accept those who speak different languages, practice unusual customs, follow different religions, observe different traditions, voice

different political views, dress unusually and even eat foreign food. This comes from being afraid of diversity and change and the inability to accept that others have varied backgrounds.

However there are many benefits of living in a culturally diverse society. Multiculturalism contributes a lot to Australian society. Without immigration Australia's population would be very small and its economy weak. We wouldn't be so diverse and rich in culture. It is great to experience different ideas, opinions, lifestyles, traditions, habits, cuisine, music, dance and fashion. Being exposed to other cultures and seeing other ways to live gives us more freedom and choices.

By encouraging racial and ethnic acceptance, promoting cross-cultural understanding and discouraging hatred, discrimination and violence we can all live in harmony.

## LET'S TALK

STORIES often appear in our newspapers and other forms of media reporting on people coming to live in Australia. Do the journalists who write these stories shape public perception and opinion? How are refugees and asylum seekers portrayed in the news? Does the

language used by the media affect our attitude towards various groups? Should words like boat people, illegal aliens, unauthorised arrivals, queue jumpers or detainees be used? What do you think? Have your say. Send your opinion to [nie@apn.com.au](mailto:nie@apn.com.au)

## WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- ▶ Find any stories or photographs of events or celebrations about Harmony Day in your newspaper.
- ▶ Find any advertisements

for restaurants or cafes that specialise in food from a particular country.

- ▶ Make a collage that shows diversity in your community.

## POEMS

IT'S all about understanding others  
**N**ot caring about their background  
**H**aving the courage to listen  
**A**ccepting their differences  
**R**especting them and reaching out to  
**M**ake them feel like they belong  
**O**pening your heart and mind to everyone  
**N**o hatred, no discrimination so  
**Y**ou and I can live in harmony  
Alannah, 11, Palmwoods State School

Important people live in Australia  
**N**eighbours come together  
**H**armony Day comes once every year  
**A**boriginal people are indigenous to our land  
**R**eady to share their culture  
**M**aking Australia a better place  
**O**pening our hearts  
**N**obody should be alone  
**Y**oung people are our future  
Ella Donnollan, 8, MacKillop Catholic Primary School

## NEXT WEEK: MATHS MIND