



Media Release

TREASURER WRONG ON MULTICULTURALISM

The President of the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcaster's Council Mr George Zangalis, today expressed his concern at the Treasurer, Mr Peter Costello's incursion into the multicultural debate.

Mr Zangalis noted that it was unfortunate that as the aspiring Prime Minister, Peter Costello has confused and angered everybody.

"Trouble is, he got it wrong..." said Mr Zangalis.

"Multiculturalism never was about the rule of law or overturning the core values of society ... it's about respect ... it's about recognizing the right of all people to maintain their cultural practices and beliefs while participating in mainstream Australian life. It promotes tolerance of diversity and affords access to opportunity for all Australians."

In acknowledging that the Treasurer was quite right when he said 'We have a robust tolerance of difference in our society, Mr Zangalis went on to say;

"We are a tolerant people because of a successful social policy like multiculturalism. One radical cleric or Canberra academic does not discredit the policy. In fact it proves just how resilient and effective it is. Multiculturalism has been an outstanding success in this country. It has been the model for other countries and has brought harmony and stability to our society. The alternative to multiculturalism is a return to the outdated and discredited policy of white Australianism."

Mr Zangalis expressed deep concern for what also appeared to be an attack on Muslim Australians.

"The majority of Muslim leaders have repeatedly repudiated extremism and violence. Why do Howard and Costello continue to raise it? Now more than ever, a more inclusive approach needs to be taken to reduce the alienation felt by some Middle Eastern and African communities. A reinvigorated multicultural policy is the answer."

"I don't know what the Treasurer thinks he is about", Zangalis concluded.

"Is he trying to be a greater 'cultural warrior' than the man whose job he seeks?"

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