



Council expresses concern at rhetoric.

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA expressed concern at the rhetoric being bandied about at the present time in respect of the Perth Primary School's decision to ban birthday celebrations.

Council President Suresh Rajan said today "Over the last two days we have seen an outpouring of sentiment caused by the Arbor Primary School decision to ban birthday celebrations. Whilst no one had any issue with the Principal, Glen Purdy, invoking the health issues involved in justifying his decision, he extended his zeal a little too far and attributed the decision to issues of "cultural diversity". Whilst his intention was well meaning and intended to create an atmosphere of inclusivity, the move failed spectacularly.

The fervour demonstrated by "culture-warriors" that filled the letters pages and dominated the talk back airwaves of Perth was quite frightening. Unfortunately the leader of the Opposition, Liza Harvey further inflamed the situation when she called the policy "Political correctness on steroids" and then went on to state "Australians should not be forced to change their own cultural traditions out of sensitivity to others".

This comment emboldened the racists out there to feel that somehow "their traditions" were under threat. Whether the bringing of cupcakes to school was ever an Australian tradition was almost a moot point. The perception was that traditions were being challenged. Ms Harvey's commentary to feed that perception was sufficient to convert that to a reality.

Let us all now sit back and reflect on what this episode has taught us. The very simple lesson for people such as the Principal is that if they are considering a decision of this nature, they can seek advice from those of us who have the lived experience of being in a minority in this country or some considerable cultural awareness.

"Events of this nature need to be handled appropriately and carefully. We commend Education Minister, Sue Ellery, who acted swiftly and decisively to quash this action. It assisted us in ensuring that the fallout was brief and hopefully minimised" said Mr Rajan. "This also highlights that the racism that exists here is often a wafer thin layer below the surface. There is much to be done to address this. We look forward to the assistance of decision makers here to assist us in so doing."

For media enquiries please contact Suresh Rajan on 0403276960

**MEDIA
RELEASE**