

Australia's Changing Religious Profile—Rising Nones and Pentecostals, Declining British Protestants in Superdiversity: Views from the 2016 Census

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Abstract

The 2016 Australian Census reveals continued change in Australia's religious diversity. While reviewing some of the highlights of this development—the continuing increase in the 'no religion' category, the first ever decline in Catholic numbers, and the rise of Hindus and Sikhs—several religious groups, which are not usually combined in the census, actually when grouped together represent most of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches and form the fourth largest religious group in Australia. These changes are set in a comparative context, internationally and intergenerationally. The religious diversity and Anglican retention rates of Stonnington—one of Melbourne's 21 Cities—are examined as a window on local diversity and change. Finally, we discuss three main categories of religion in contemporary Australia: the 'nones'; the spiritual but not religious; and the religious and spiritual. The data reveal a new context of superdiversity in Australia.

Keywords

Religious diversity, religious 'nones', superdiversity, youth and religion.

Introduction

The 2016 Australian Census reveals continued change in Australia's dynamic religious and cultural diversity. This article reviews some of the highlights of this development, sets them in a comparative context, internationally and intergenerationally, examines a window on local diversity and change, and provides some evidence on the 'nones'. The rise of this superdiversity has also occasioned anticospopolitan reactions.



We apply Steven Vertovec's (2007) term superdiversity to the Australian context given that, similar to what he observed in the UK in the late 2000s, policy, public understanding and research do not in many cases adequately reflect the lived reality of Australia's ethnic diversity. This diversity is a result of new waves of migration, and the complex interplay of additional factors including religion, language, age, gender, spatial distribution, immigration status, occupation, and access to services, which shape the composition and trajectories of these communities and power dynamics within and between groups. In this paper we focus mainly on religion, age and new patterns of inclusion and prejudice in twenty-first-century Australian society.

Australia's Changing Religious Profile

An analysis of religious and spiritual life in Australia best begins with reference to Indigenous peoples—the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups—who have over 50,000 years of history. Indigenous peoples spoke more than 250 languages and 600 dialects. They have and continue to produce and reproduce richly diverse cultures with many societies, nations and religions (Bell 2009; Carey 1996, 2009). From this it becomes clear that religious linguistic and cultural diversity is part of the deep history of this land now called Australia. Religious and cultural diversity are and have been for tens of thousands of years in this sense 'normal' to this continent. According to the 2016 census, 1.9% of Australians identify as Indigenous Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

It should also be noted that contact between Australian Indigenous communities and Sulawesi and Chinese traders predates British settlement. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, before the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901—popularly known as the White Australia Policy—Australia was more diverse culturally and religiously than in subsequent decades, and included Taoists, Confucians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, who worked in the goldfields, cotton and sugar plantations, or as pearl fishers or camel drivers (Croucher 1989; Ganter 2008).

Data on Indigenous religious identification is not yet available from the 2016 census at the time of writing. According to Associate Professor John Bradley, an Anthropologist at Monash University's Indigenous Studies Centre (private communication 2017), Australian Indigenous people are being very open and free in their negotiation of the religious and spiritual space, rather like other Australians. According to earlier census reports (Bell 2009) most identify with a Christian group—largely Anglican, Lutheran or Baptist—reflecting nineteenth-century missionary activity. A

small percentage, around 2%, report following traditional Indigenous religious practices. According to Bradley, Indigenous people are very likely to be traditional when in traditional communities, and are also currently picking and choosing among the wide variety of spiritual paths available. Bradley quoted a senior woman he has worked with for some time:

Look you know I love God, that missionary taught me well and I understand about the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I pray every day too, church on Sundays and I teach my grandkids, but you know I still follow my own Law, from my father and grandfather, that same missionary told me to give it up, but you know he does not know the love I have for my Law, my country, he does not want to know, so I carry both ways.

There are now Indigenous Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons and Muslims. Bradley noted that Indigenous contact with Muslim cultures commenced well before white settlement and is reflected in sacred songs of great antiquity. Indigenous communities and Buddhists have also shared a long history of interaction in Australia, especially in the Far North (Croucher 1989).

Table 1. Religious change in Australia: major groups (>3%)

| % in | 1911 | 1947 | 1966 | 1991 | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Anglican | 38.4 | 39.0 | 33.5 | 23.9 | 18.7 | 17.1 | 13.3 |
| Catholic | 22.4 | 20.7 | 26.2 | 27.4 | 25.8 | 25.3 | 22.6 |
| MCPRU* | 26.5 | 22.1 | 19.4 | 12.9 | 8.7 | 7.7 | 6.0 |
| Pentecostal+** | — | — | — | 0.9 | 2.7 | 3.3 | 3.7 |
| CHRIST'N total | 96.9 | 88.0 | 88.2 | 74.1 | 63.9 | 61.1 | 52.1 |
| NONES | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 12.9 | 18.7 | 22.3 | 30.1 |
| Other Rels | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 2.6 | 5.6 | 7.2 | 8.2 |
| No response | 2.1 | 11.2 | 10.3 | 10.4 | 11.8 | 9.4 | 9.6 |

* Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and Uniting

** Pentecostal, plus 'Christian', 'Apostolic Church', 'Church of God', 'Australian Christian Churches', 'New Church Alliance', 'Faith Churches' so described and not further defined.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics—various census reports compiled by G. Bouma.

Table 1 presents a time series of major religious groups in Australia post-1911. Each of these columns represents a specific 'generation'. People who were young in 1947, while the White Australia Policy was in full-swing, experienced Australia's religious profile in the way it was then. To them that pattern was and is 'normal' and many of them have difficulty coming to terms with Australia's changing religious landscape. When '...being Australian was synonymous with being British, the Church of England was a bastion of English cultural heritage and...Presbyterians... of Scottish' ancestry (Frappell 2002), and British Protestants dominated religious, cultural and social life and were seen as the 'norm' (Hogan 1987). As a result, some older generation conservative policy makers'

attempts to relate to religious issues often seem to be addressing a world that has now passed, or to be striving to (re)establish a nostalgic memory of a golden age, one of a white, Christian Australia.

The major changes since the 1970s include the fact that Anglicans and British Protestants no longer rule the roost as they did before this (Hilliard 2002). For many decades the major division in Australian society was between Protestants and Catholics (Hogan 1987; Dixon 2005; Bouma 2006). In 1947 Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians combined to comprise over 60% of the population, with Catholics at 20.7%. The Christian percentage has declined significantly to 52.1% in 2016, basically halving since 1911. By contrast, there has been a substantial and steady increase in the percentage of those declaring that they have 'no religion', increasing to a current level of 30.1%. Those declaring a religion other than Christianity have also risen to 8.2%. The non-response rate held at just above 10% from the time it was permitted not to respond, but has come down by 2 percentage points in the 2011 and 2016 censuses. These respondents have moved to declare 'no religion' or to nominating a religion, which is a possible indicator that religious identity—including declaring 'none'—has increased in salience along with the increasingly unavoidable presence of religious diversity, particularly its visible forms.

There is a group that has been hidden (whether deliberately or not is unknown) in the usual presentation of Census results—those belonging to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Those reporting such an affiliation have been constant at 1.1% for many years. However, there is another category—Christian n.f.d. (not further defined)—which has demonstrated significant growth (80%), increasing from 1.6% in 2006 to 2.6% in 2016. This category, according to the ABS footnote to the relevant tables, includes those who nominated the 'Apostolic Church', 'Church of God', Australian Christian Churches' (Formerly Assemblies of God), 'New Church Alliance' and 'Faith Churches', each of which are in the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and emerging church sector of Christianity. When combined, following the ABS Classification of Religious Group (ABS 2016), this group comprises 872,929 people and forms 3.7% of the population, making it the same as the Uniting Church at 870,183 people. These two categories are now tied for the fourth largest religious group in Australia. In descending order, the largest religious groups are: Nones, Catholic, Anglicans, and Pentecostal tied with Uniting. Given that those identifying with 'Pentecostal' groups are much more likely to attend church regularly, the impact of this group has been underestimated and its role in public policy is not taken as seriously as it should be.

Among smaller religious groups, the 2016 census reveals that there are now more Muslims (2.6%) than Presbyterians (2.3%). There are more Buddhists (2.4%) and Hindus (1.9%) than Baptists (1.5%) or Lutherans

(0.7%), and more Sikhs (0.5%) than Jews (0.4%). This religious profile is radically different to that found in 1947 or 1966 or even as recently as 1990. Australia's population has grown significantly in size but even more so in religious and ethnic diversity. Dealing with these realities is a major task of religious groups and governments (Bouma 2011, 2012; Possamai 2009; Jupp 2009b; Halafoff 2013).

Since European settlement Australia's religious profile has been a function of migration (Jupp 2009a). According to the 2016 Census over 25% of Australians were born overseas, and over 50% were either born overseas or had one or more parent who was born overseas. The changing patterns of migration are reflected in both the rise and fall of religious groups and changes to their internal composition and diversity (Jupp 2009b). The 1901 White Australia policy favoured British migrants and helped sustain the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The high water mark for Anglicans in Australia was 1921 when 43.7% of the population nominated the Church of England as their religion. Migration after World War II brought British and Northern European migrants, Anglicans, Dutch Reformed and Jews. As the 'White Australia' policy was gradually disbanded, later migration from Southern Europe brought Italians, Greeks, and then Egyptians, Turks, Cypriots and Lebanese and also South East Asian migrants including Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai and Laotians (Jupp 2009b). Recent migration has been from South Asia, swelling the numbers of Hindus (up 145% from 2006) and Sikhs (up 248% since 2006). While Catholics lost absolute numbers in the last five years, their growth has been the product of substantial migration since World War II and recent migration from many countries has lessened the loss (Dixon 2016). However, recent controversies surrounding the Catholic church, particularly related to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, appear to have taken their toll on membership (Cahill and Wilkinson 2017).

The religious landscape is most definitely changing, away from a predominantly white, Christian society, to a much more multicultural, multifaith and non-religious one. This is a reality being at once embraced and resisted by many, particularly those who feel that their once privileged social and economic positions and values are being challenged. We will discuss this in more detail in the concluding section of our paper.

Australia Compared

The data presented in Table 2 compares Australia's religious profile with that of selected other countries, most quite similar to Australia, being former British colonies and English-speaking nations, with France as a contrast. This diversity has been discussed in greater depth elsewhere

(Bouma 2016). The main points of difference include the fact that Australia has three substantial minority religious communities—Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus—as a result of its geographical proximity to Asia. Moreover, given current rates of migration from South Asia, Hindus in Australia will certainly number well over 2% in 2021. Canada and the United Kingdom have substantial Muslim populations, but are exceeded by France, which like much of the rest of Europe has a Christian cultural base to which more-or-less welcomed Muslims have been added historically and currently, through guest worker programs, migration and refugee settlement. Those declaring that they have ‘no religion’ is at or approaching 30% in most countries with the exception of the United States, which in some ways is the most predominantly Christian and least religiously diverse of these nations.

Table 2. Religious Diversity Compared (% In 2010/16*)

| | AUS* | NZ/A | UK | CAN | USA | FR |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Christian | 52.1 | 57.0 | 71.1 | 67.3 | 78.3 | 63.0 |
| Buddhist | 2.4 | 1.6 | 0.4 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 0.5 |
| Muslim | 2.6 | 1.2 | 4.4 | 3.2 | 0.9 | 7.5 |
| Hindu | 1.9 | 2.1 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 0.6 | <0.1 |
| Jew | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.8 | 0.5 |
| None | 30.1 | 36.6 | 21.3 | 23.7 | 16.4 | 28.0 |

Source: Pew 2012, *ABS 2017,

The future of religious diversity in Australia depends, as it has since European settlement, on migration and to a lesser degree on fertility. Migrants tend to be comparatively young and fertile, meaning that groups such as Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs are likely to grow through both immigration and reproduction yet do so from a low percentage of the population. Moreover, fertility rates of migrants tend to become closer to that of the larger population the longer they are in Australia. However, given their age profile (see Table 3), Anglicans, Presbyterians, Uniting and Jews are not likely to enjoy growth from high rates of fertility. Given low rates of fertility and low rates of retention, these groups are in decline and aging (see Table 4). Finally, conversion plays only a small part in changes to the religious profile of Australia.

Table 3 compares the age distribution of several of Australia’s religious groups. Nones, Pentecostals, Christian n.f.d., Hindus and Muslims are skewed toward younger people. Catholics have a distribution that closely corresponds to the broader national pattern. Anglicans, Uniting, Presbyterians and Jews are seriously skewed toward the elderly, with nearly 60% of their populations over 45. As one participant in a focus group we recently conducted as part of an ARC discovery project among students

born after 2000 said of a suburban Melbourne Anglican parish: 'That's where old people go'. The age distributions point toward continued decline for the British Protestants as the elderly die and are not 'replaced' by similar numbers from younger cohorts. Catholics will likely retain their position as the numerically strongest Christian group, largely as a result of migration, and are served by the most extensive array of social, health and welfare organisations as well as by many parishes (Dixon 2005).

Table 3. Religion by Age (% in Australia 2016)

| | 0–24 | 25–44 | 45–64 | 65+ |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| None | 37.3 | 32.0 | 21.7 | 9.0 |
| Catholics | 32.3 | 25.1 | 26.0 | 16.6 |
| Anglicans | 21.9 | 19.3 | 31.2 | 27.6 |
| Uniting | 21.1 | 17.8 | 30.9 | 27.6 |
| Christian n.f.d. | 35.4 | 28.6 | 24.6 | 11.4 |
| Pentecostals | 37.5 | 34.0 | 24.3 | 4.2 |
| Buddhists | 26.6 | 36.1 | 28.3 | 9.0 |
| Hindus | 32.8 | 50.8 | 12.8 | 3.6 |
| Muslims | 44.5 | 36.4 | 14.3 | 4.8 |
| NATIONAL TOTAL | 31.4 | 27.8 | 25.0 | 15.8 |

Source: ABS 2016 Census compiled by G. Bouma

Diversity and Change at a Local Level

To get a picture of religious diversity and change at a local level we selected the city of Stonnington, which is one of the more affluent suburbs of Melbourne. The proportion of major religious groups is given in Table 4. Melbourne has one of the largest Greek Orthodox communities outside of Greece, but this is beginning to decline as migration slows and the group ages. Jewish communities have also long settled in the city of Stonnington, which explains their much higher percentage here than in other parts of Melbourne. The wealthy and Melbourne 'establishment' nature of this area may account for the lower percentage of Muslims and Buddhists, who are represented in higher numbers in the outer suburbs. In the past five years Stonnington has witnessed a very large number of new high-rise apartments being built with a surge in its population of young adults. This is possibly reflected in Stonnington's higher percentage of 'nones' compared with the national average. It may possibly also account for the rise in Hindu numbers, which were very disproportionately represented in the 25–34 age range.

An understanding of decline is helped by examining the recent changes in numbers identifying as Anglican in the city of Stonnington, which is well served by about twelve Anglican Churches, some of the most prominent in Melbourne—St John's Toorak, St George's Malvern,

Christ Church South Yarra and others—along with elite Anglican schools. Table 5 presents telling evidence about the Anglican Church. At each age category the Anglican Church loses from 25% to 47% of those who had declared ten years before that they were Anglican. The large loss among those who were 0–14 in 2006 and 15–24 in 2016 is usual in censuses as the earlier census declaration would likely have been made on behalf of the child by a parent and the next one by the person as a young adult. However, failure to retain does not stop there. Anglicans seem to just keep leaving. A study of ex-Anglicans is called for. Any commercial establishment suffering losses like this would conduct exit interviews, and seek the advice of those who had left.

Table 4. Religious Groups as a Percentage of the Population

| Year | Stonnington | | | Melbourne |
|------------------|-------------|------|-------|-----------|
| | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 | 2016 |
| None | 21.1 | 27.5 | 38.5* | 31.5 |
| Anglicans | 16.9 | 14.9 | 11.2 | 7.6 |
| Catholics | 21.3 | 20.8 | 19.2 | 23.4 |
| Eastern O | 6.0 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 4.3 |
| Judaism | 5.1 | 4.9 | 4.0 | 0.9 |
| Uniting | 4.4 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| Muslim | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 2.8 |
| Buddhist | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| Hindu | 1.5 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 1.1 |

Source: ABS 2016 Census

Note: Stonnington grew 12.2% 2006–2016 from 89,885 to 100,832. *There was a substantial jump in 25–34 year old population from 18,220 to 24,674 (35.4%) due to a spate of new apartment construction.

Table 5. Anglican Retention 2006–2016 in Stonnington

| Age in 2006 | number in 2006 | number in 2016 | Loss | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------|-----|
| 0–14 | 2179 | 1160 | -1019 | 47% |
| 15–24 | 1693 | 1238 | -625 | 37% |
| 25–34 | 2092 | 1309 | -783 | 38% |
| 35–44 | 2233 | 1674 | -559 | 25% |
| 45–54 | 1991 | 1442 | -549 | 28% |
| 55–64 | 2023 | 1470 | -553 | 27% |
| 65– | 1337 | 923 | -414 | 31% |

Source: ABS Census 2016, compiled by G. Bouma

Brown and Woodhead (2017) paint the picture for the Church of England's declining numbers—boring services, failure to recognise the ministry of women, and being on the wrong side of moral issues such as the recognition of same-sex couples. As reasons for the fall of Anglicans in Australia, Stolz et al. (2017) and Bouma (2014) point to the massive competition from secular agencies and organisations for the provision of

social security, entertainment, community, opportunities to serve and meet people—the welfare state, the internet, coffee shops, gyms, the movement of women into employment outside the home, reactions against patriarchy, and more. From one perspective the churches have failed to keep up with consumer preferences and from another the churches are the victims of a massive change and increase in the ways human needs and wants are supplied (Bouma 2014).

Who Are the Nones?

As seen in the city of Stonnington case study above, those declaring that they have ‘no religion’ are a rising proportion in all Western nations and on many forms the largest group of respondents to questions on religious identity (see Table 3, Pew 2012). Woodhead (2016a) observes that a majority of respondents to recent surveys in the UK report no religion, heralding a substantial change in British culture. Recent demographic developments similarly reveal a new religious context in Australia with the growth of a major non-religious sector. For ‘nones’ religion is identified as institutionalised belief, formal organisations and practices, and a community dominated by the old, males, patriarchal attitudes and, to put it simply, ‘not-us’ (Mason, Singleton and Webber 2007; Cusack 2011). Woodhead points to the pluralisation and liberalisation of society and ethics rendering religion a choice, and to the fact that in reaction to these processes religious groups have become less plural and more conservative, thus leaving the option of participating less possible for young people (2016a). What do we know about Australian ‘nones’?

A window on ‘nones’ and young people is provided by a national random survey of 1,258 Australians over 18 conducted by The National Church Life Survey organisation in December 2016. The NCLS reported in one of their bulletins that responses to this survey revealed three patterns of religion among Australians—Nones, SBNR (Spiritual, but not religious) and Religious and Spiritual. Figures supporting the existence of ‘nones’ is found in the data from this sample: 36% said religion was unimportant; 25% said religion was of little importance to them; 54% never or hardly ever pray; and 68% never or less than once a year attend religious services. There appear to be at least two types of ‘nones’: those who are irreligious, for whom religion is meaningless, and a few who are actively anti-religious (Mason et al. 2007; Barna 2013). If they are under 30 years old, many have a ‘Whatever’ attitude toward religion (Mason et al. 2007; Halafoff and Gobey forthcoming). Our preliminary research among Australian millennials has provided us with even greater insights on the meaning of ‘Whatever’. This does not mean indifference, not caring or ignorance. Indeed, a better description of the attitudes and

behaviours of those born this century relative to religious diversity is that they are *awash, but not adrift in a sea of diversity*. Superdiversity, of all kinds—cultural, religious, non-religious, gender and sexuality, and multi-species—is an everyday part of their lived reality, be they non-religious or religious, and for the most part they seem to be respectful of it. This is currently being investigated in more detail by the present authors.¹

Evidence for the existence of SBNR (spiritual but not religious)—those who meditate, contemplate, express gratitude, are thoughtful, mindful, discuss meaning, volunteer, sacrifice, celebrate, are open to the ‘more than’ and engage in ‘world repairing’ (Woodhead 2016b) activities often in groups or networks including those found online—comes from these responses to the NCLS survey of Australians: 45% said they believe in God; another 20% cannot choose, are agnostic; 28% said they have had a mystical or supernatural experience, either positive or negative, which they have no doubt was real; another 34% said ‘no they have not had such an experience, but I believe it could happen or know someone who has’; and 30% pray/meditate more than weekly.

When we raise the existence of SBNRs we observe that they are despised by two groups. First, the religious who judge them as inadequate, not up to standards since they have no creed, no head office, no clergy, no depth while hoping that they might wind up in church, synagogue, mosque, temple when they see the light, or tire of their shallow ways. And second, the Secularists who cannot believe their eyes and ears and judge them as ‘irrational’, or think it is just a passing phase on the way to atheism.

Young People and Religion

A cluster analysis was employed by The National Church Life Survey to determine the distribution of religious styles in the whole sample and among young people 18–29 years of age. The variables used to distinguish clusters were responses to: ‘To what extent do you see yourself as a religious person?’ ‘To what extent do you see yourself as a spiritual person?’ ‘How important is religious faith or spirituality in shaping your life decisions?’ Three clusters emerged in the analysis.

‘Nones’ comprised 39.9% of the national sample and 41.6 % of 18–29 year old respondents. Nones also declared that they have no religion, that they were atheist or agnostic, never attend religious services, do not pray or meditate and have not had mystical experiences.

‘SBNRs’ comprised 16.9% of the national sample and 16% of those 18–29 years old. SBNRs also declared that they have no religion, but

1. See future publications arising from our Australian Research Council (ARC) study on ‘Young Australian’s perspectives on religious and non-religious worldviews’ (2016–2019).

believe in a spirit/life force, that they do not attend religious services, and hardly ever pray/meditate. SBNRs were the most likely of the three clusters to have mystical experiences.

'Religious and Spiritual' comprised 43.3% of the national sample and 42.4% of those respondents 18–29 years old. This cluster identified with a religion, reported that they attend services infrequently, but that they frequently pray/meditate.

Statistically significant differences in the national sample were found among the clusters. The SBNRs were slightly more likely to be women. They were the most likely to take action to reduce their impact on the environment. The Nones were the least likely to do unpaid voluntary work, then the SBNRs and especially the Religious and Spiritual. Nones had the lowest level of education, were slightly more likely to be male, and were the least likely to have had contact with Indigenous Australians, people of other religions or recent migrants to Australia. There was no appreciable difference by birthplace or by age except for there being very few SBNRs in the 70+ category.

It should be noted that while many studies of religion and youth in Australia have stressed secularism, individualism and consumerism in the shaping of young Australian's religiosity and in the decline of any religious affiliation (Mason et al. 2007; Possamai 2009; Cusack 2011) they may have, in our opinion these studies have paid insufficient attention to the young people who take their religious and non-religious identities seriously (Halafoff and Gobey forthcoming). In addition, it is clear from these data alone that the 'no religion' category is highly diverse and is not solely comprised of those who are anti-religion. Much more research is required to begin to appreciate the ways religious and non-religious Australians, especially young Australians, negotiate their lives, engage in world-mending, celebrate life events and sustain hope (Mason et al. 2007; Cusack 2011). While such activities have traditionally been associated with religious organisations and faith, it is clear that there is much going on outside these places that is both highly diverse and effective (Halafoff and Gobey forthcoming).

The census and the NCLS data reveal a new religious context, one that is at the same time more religious and spiritual and in many ways less traditionally religious (Woodhead 2016a). The continued presence of religious persons/communities who take their religions seriously means that there are fewer nominals. Much of the decline, for example, among Anglicans is of nominals—those who might have previously nominated Church of England as a way of indicating a vague allegiance to things English, but for whom that too has lost salience. At the same time many of those who remain Christian are more conservative than was the case thirty years ago (Bouma and Dixon 1986; Brown and Woodhead 2016),

and note the rise of the Pentecostal and Christian n.f.d. group. Moreover, migration has brought to Australia Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Baha'is and a host of others who take their religions seriously and who are not a hangover from the past but a twenty-first-century religious reality, fully engaged with the latest forms of communication, social media savvy, informed, and articulate. Most are ready to let others be 'whatever', but some are not.

Diversity Compounded—Internal Difference

To this point Australia has been viewed as a mosaic. Census data and analysis by religious group leads to assumptions that religious labels or identities refer to internally cohesive, monolithic groups. But what of these 'one-colour' pieces in the mosaic of Australian religious groups? It is said that there are 1.6 billion ways to be a Muslim. Similarly, Anglican diversity is legendary and highly contested (Porter 2011). Moreover, while a few decades ago religious groups tended to be identified with particular ethnic groups—Anglicans were English, Presbyterians Scottish and Catholics Irish—now many religious groups are very diverse in terms of the ethnic origins of those who identify with them. Muslims come from over 60 countries, Buddhists from many backgrounds, and Catholics are no longer only Irish or Italian but from Vietnam, the Philippines or elsewhere (Jupp 2009a, 2009b). Hybridity and multiple identities are also increasingly frequent, and people are more likely than ever to change their religious affiliation within or across denominations over time (McGuire 2008; Halafoff and Gobey forthcoming)

Religion and spirituality are in many ways out of the control of both 'church' and state. Religion is online, freely and immediately available at a click, in a way it was not in the past. This brings even more diversity. People's lived religious and spiritual experiences, and what people religious and non-religious hold as sacred, cannot simply be encompassed by ticking a single box of a Census question, as was clearly exemplified in the quotation in the opening section of this article from the Indigenous woman depicting lived religion (see McGuire 2008). As a result this kind of measure of religious identity tells us very little. Religious and non-religious diversity make for a much more confusing and at times more contested policy context, given that many of Australia's policies and practices do not reflect the lived reality of superdiversity. We are also in new territory where some hard-fought-for rights and freedoms currently risk being overturned by pressure from conservative groups, which are strongly resisting this superdiversity.

Broadly speaking, the nones and the SBNRs are more likely to have more progressive cosmopolitan attitudes that respect diversity as long as

one group's rights do not compromise the rights of others. The seriously religious may be either progressive or conservative, and this may include the Christian majority and other minority faith groups. There is a global trend for these conservative anti-cosmopolitan religious groups to align with conservative governments, and to push for religious rights to triumph over others. We are currently witnessing this play out in Australia's marriage equality debate, and in rising rates of Islamophobia. Older and less-educated Australians are most likely to reject immigration and cultural diversity (Markus 2016).

The influence that conservative Christian groups, including the growing number of Pentecostals, and Christians not further defined, have in the public sphere, on social media and on Australian policy should also not be underestimated (Maddox 2005, 2014). Neither should the fact that most politicians are from the Baby Boomer generation, and thus grew up in an artificially constructed white, largely Protestant Australia of long ago. Hope lies with the younger generations, in a time when more Generation Xs lead our government, and more Millennials—and the generations that follow them—are able to vote and assume positions of power to protect the rights of all people and species in our superdiverse societies. By this time we may also have developed new ways of measuring and understanding their lived experiences of this superdiversity, well beyond the narrow categories available to us today.

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