

Media Release

***'Cracking the cultural ceiling'* continues to challenge Australian businesses says Tom Verghese**

Thursday March 8, 2018. Globalisation is creating a smaller and more connected global community, however, as we are pulled together, there is a strong opposing push that is driving many people and communities to become increasingly singular said Cultural Synergies founder Dr Tom Verghese at the recent launch of his latest book '25 Years On: A Collection of 25 Reflections as an Inter-Cultural Management Consultant'.



In his opening remarks Tom pointed to today's smartphones that are commonplace and how we spend an inordinate amount of time on our phones using them for a whole myriad of personal and professional purposes. "Yet, although we are more interconnected than we have possibly ever been and have much greater social reach, the quality and depth of conversations appears to be overlooked.

"Depression and anxieties are increasing; and our sense of community seems to be declining irrespective of this interconnectedness", he added.

Tom Verghese also reflected on the increasing focus in Australia to 'Embracing the Asian Century' and trading with the fastest growing region in the world. "As Australian organisations spread their wings and expand into new international markets it is inevitable that they encounter unforeseen and unimagined cultural challenges.

"These situations are largely unknown until companies emerge from their mono-cultural environments as the result of overseas expansion that become initially turbulent, unpredictable environments".

"Australian businesspeople are interacting more than in the mid 1990's with others from different cultural backgrounds, and although the need for Cultural Intelligence is greater today than it was over two decades ago; business leaders continue to need convincing that it is an integral part of human and commercial success".

Far too often the question that is overlooked is *Are your organisational structures aligned with local 'on the ground' structures?* The ability to flex and adapt to new environments is a core capability essential to effective leadership when operating internationally.

"Rather than always expecting circumstances and people to work within your leadership model, sometimes you just have to rapidly accept what you have to work with and get on with the job", said Tom Verghese.

"It might mean that you have to manage your teams in a different style, deliver feedback in a manner that is more direct or indirect to what you are accustomed to, or adjust your expectations of your teams".

Don't waste time trying to change what you can't rather, work with what you have and flex your leadership style and techniques to get optimum outcomes for yourself and your organisation was Tom's recommendation to the audience.

Tom Verghese went on to reference The Diversity Council Australia 2014 study that looked at why, despite large numbers of entry level and middle level Asian managers, there are so few Asian leaders reaching the top in Australian organisations; and further how Australian organisations could realise the promise and potential of this Asian talent.

“When I read statistics such as 30% of Asian talent are likely to leave their employer within the next year and that only 17% strongly agree that their organisations utilise their Asia capabilities well. It indicates to me that Asian talent is being seriously undervalued and underleveraged”, affirmed Tom Verghese.

“The impact that this has on organisations, not just in terms of talent, but also innovation potential and the impact on existing and possible international markets, demonstrates wasted opportunities with the Australian landscape”.

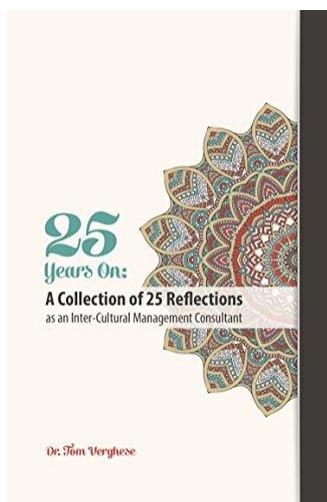
Tom Verghese concluded his presentation on conscious and unconscious biases. They help us to navigate our social interactions and judgements, and drive our decisions and behaviours; however, we do need to have an awareness of what they are and when they are influencing our decisions and behaviours.

An Unconscious Bias is just that unconscious. They are prejudices or assumptions that are made about another person or group, rather than thoughtful judgement. They can be demonstrated in many different forms or behaviours and reactions, such as excluding individuals from conversations, failing to give due attention or acknowledgement during conversations, or excluding conversation participation via discussion topics such as sport or politics.

We all have unconscious biases, but how do we begin to understand what they are and their impacts? It begins with raising our own awareness.

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25 Years On: A Collection of 25 Reflections as an Inter-Cultural Management Consultant by Dr Tom Verghese is available on www.amazon.com