**Dr Zareh Ghazarian (Zareh):** Hi Chiara, what are some key concepts in the Citizenship, Diversity and Identity strand?

**Dr Chiara De Lazzari (Chiara):** The Citizenship, Diversity and Identity strand looks at Australian society and how society can function cohesively, how shared values of civic society and identity plays a role of cohesion, and it also explores how people experience citizenship and express their identities in a multi-faith pluralist society.

**Zareh:** OK, so let's unpack that first. What does it mean to be part of, firstly, a culturally diverse, multi-faith and secular society, as well as a pluralist and inclusive society?

**Chiara:** So Australia is made of many different cultural, religious and social groups. Language is one of the ways people express their identity, as well as other customs and traditions, for instance. A multi-faith and secular society means that people have the freedom to be part of any faith of their choice. At the same time, everybody is equally required to follow the laws written by the parliament in Australia and part of the legal system.

**Zareh:** So what does this tell us about our democratic values there?

**Chiara:** This tells us that tolerance and diversity are very important in Australian society. And we respect a range of cultural backgrounds and people have to be encouraged to understand differences and different perspectives and viewpoints. A key pillar of our democracy is to allow everyone to have a voice, and their voice to be heard. There are also other unifying values that all Australians can relate such as democratic principles of fairness, respect and freedom. And these values are very important and shared around the concept of national identity.

**Zareh:** So what are the challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society? What can we do to protect and promote democratic values?

**Chiara:** So these values are crucial for social cohesion which help us to achieve a well-functioning and resilient society. In addition, Australia protects the right for participation and advocacy on social and political matters. So Australia has also signed international agreements that allow for peaceful protest, as well as freedom of association. And so while freedom of speech is not explicitly provided for in the Australian Constitution, it is identified as an important part of national values. These features and rights provide opportunities for people to present different viewpoints and perspectives, no matter their identity and cultural background.

**Zareh:** Now let's talk about what global citizenship is, and how it's different from Australian citizenship.

**Chiara:** So being a global citizen means recognising a community that's broader than your own one, in your own country. There are many global issues that are affecting the whole planet. And so having an understanding of these issues, and being able to identify them, not just from a national community perspective but also indeed the international role of this issue and the role that we can play as global citizens. And these challenges can be tackled in a coordinated kind of way. Think for example of global health events, or economic or environmental crises, that go well beyond national borders. Looking at these types of issues can help us to broaden our view of citizenship and see the potential for civic participation on a global scale. Dual citizenship also helps shape multiple identities and the concept of global citizenship. Some citizens have a sense of belonging to more than one country, the country of their family background, for instance, and of course, Australia. Dual citizenship helps to foster an interest on issues that go beyond national borders, and aren't necessarily part of the country which they live, but are indeed more global issues. And it's important for students to explore the concept of global citizenship in order to develop an understanding of universal values and practise living them out.

**Zareh:** Let's turn our attention to the media. And how do you think the media shapes and influences our understanding of citizenship?

**Chiara:** Traditional media and social media shape our understanding on citizenship in many different ways. This might be coverage of particular events that are seen to express national values. It can also involve how different cultural groups are represented, and this representation can have an impact on how people see these groups and they perceive them. Social media in particular provides a platform for diverse groups to express their identities, their views, and engage with a broader community. While social media can provide a lot of positive elements, we need to remember that it is not often subject to established editorial filters of other media and there's a scope for misinformation and distribution of misinformation as well.

**Zareh:** So how might this apply then to global citizenship?

**Chiara:** The media plays a crucial role about reporting global events. And it is showing us what's happening in our global community. This helps broaden our perspective and giving us an opportunity to consider what our responsibility might be in these events. It also reminds us that we are, through technology, for instance, capable of being involved in many ways. Again, social media can be useful for this, by providing a platform that are, you know, the way individuals can have a voice and express their concerns, but also get connected with other like-minded people, and organise collective action. In all of these contexts, it is important for students to develop their critical lens in order to identify different perspectives and make informed choices and decisions.

**Zareh:** Chiara, you've touched on this. So what are the characteristics then of an active citizen, and an informed citizen?

**Chiara:** So active citizenship means that citizens are motivated to take action. Informed citizens and informed participation means that citizens know how to take action. Citizens have certain roles and responsibilities in the Australian democratic system. They are part of a broader liberal democratic framework, which provides individuals certain rights and freedom. These involve responsibilities such as obeying the law, voting in elections, serving on juries if required. Being an active citizen means participating in these democratic processes that are important for shaping our society. However, citizens play a broader role than just participating in elections. Active citizenship is being involved in all aspects of the community life, including advocating for changes, through different kinds of means such as lobbying for decision making, and organising for contribution or contributing in various campaigns. Being an informed citizen means that having a well developed understanding of how your action can have an impact on our community and democracy. This might apply to knowledge about the electoral system, ways to communicate with the local community, and discuss concerns, and how to organise collective action.

**Zareh:** Why is active citizenship and informed participation important in a democracy?

**Chiara:** Active citizenship and informed participation encourage a healthy democracy where decisions are made collaboratively and individuals understand their rights, their freedoms and their duties. Students who learn to be active citizens in school are then able to be active in their community, engage with political life and then can shape the community.

**Zareh:** Thanks, Chiara, that's been fascinating. Thanks for joining me.

**Chiara:** Thank you for having me.

[Copyright Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2022](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Copyright.aspx)