

# Grant Culture and the Business of Community: Indonesian Organisations in Sydney

*Nicola Frost*  
*City University*

## **Abstract**

Indonesian third sector organisations in Sydney compete with each other and with other migrant organisations for access to state resources, in the form of contracts to provide welfare services to their respective ethnic constituencies. Such a process requires a sophisticated strategic understanding of representational paradigms and policy contexts, in particular in this case that of Australian multiculturalism. Demonstrating an organisation's position as representative of a recognisable ethnic 'community' is an important part of this strategy. The paper examines the effect of 'claiming community' in this manner on representational politics within the Indonesian population in the city, and between Indonesian organisations and state bodies. Subcontracting essential settlement services in the name of multicultural devolution can appear to dislodge market principles in favour of a model that references Gemeinschaft-style ethnic allegiance and kin-based micro-democracy (at the same time as cutting costs). Such a mechanism has, in the wake of the Bali bombings, acquired an additional function that links such initiatives with imperatives for social cohesion, implying a parallel shift in responsibility for 'community harmony' that raises urgent questions about accountability and language. The paper considers the experience of one Indonesian organisation as it attempts to navigate this complex territory: it suggests that market principles remain a significant reference point within such organisations, and that, paradoxically, the pressure to demonstrate 'community' in a way that fails to acknowledge this, actually militates against its practical manifestation.