



PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
LAUNCH OF ALP POLICY ON IMMIGRATION, ETHNIC AFFAIRS
AND MULTICULTURALISM
MELBOURNE - 15 MARCH 1990**

Friends

It gives me enormous satisfaction to stand before you today and to welcome you, as my Government has always welcomed you, as "fellow Australians".

Satisfaction that, in those two words, is summed up the vision of a genuinely multicultural Australia to which all our people - no matter what their birthplace or their colour, their religion or first language - can feel committed.

Satisfaction - and also pride. Because if there is one thing that our seven years of Government will have proved to our ethnic communities, and which they will bear in mind as they cast their vote on March 24, it is that the Labor Government delivers.

My Government does not indulge in hollow rhetoric and smooth slogans. It delivers substance, realistic policies and real answers.

It does not look back with misplaced nostalgia to a supposedly uniform Australia that has never existed. It looks forward to a vibrant and diverse Australia in which all our people live and work together as equals, in harmony.

It does not remember its ethnic communities only when there is an election on. It consults with them, with their representatives, with their media, as part of the routine of Government.

Friends

If you think back over the last term of my Government, and when you examine our achievements in the area of immigration policy, ethnic affairs and multiculturalism, you will recognise one unarguable truth. We do not, nor will we ever, sell out our principles for short-term political advantage.

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On that you have my word.

We will not, explicitly or implicitly, seek to return to an immigration policy which discriminates between people on the basis of ethnic origin.

We will not, by the sly wink or discreet nudge, treat some Australians as more Australian than others.

We will not, by carefully avoiding the word, seek to water down our vision of a multicultural Australia offering equal opportunity for all.

In 1983 I gave my word.

I outlined a vision of an Australia bound together by co-operation and consensus, rather than torn and divided by confrontation. I promised to lead Australia to a future free of prejudice and discrimination and offering equal opportunity for all our people.

In the policy I launch today is set out the record of my Governments since 1983 in the area of immigration, ethnic and multicultural affairs.

I am very happy to stand before you on this record.

It lays the foundations for the future.

It lies at the very heart of the program that I delivered at the ALP policy launch in Brisbane just over a week ago.

At that launch I presented a comprehensive, realistic, responsible and achievable plan for Australia's future.

I set forward an agenda for a fair society with opportunity open to all Australians wherever they were born, whatever their background.

Those of you who watched the launch will have been moved, as all of us present were, at the stirring rendition given to our national anthem by a young Australian, Clare Gormley, who can trace her roots to Ireland, Germany and Papua New Guinea. Her talent and self-confidence symbolized the changing face of Australia. As her voice rang out, it bore testimony to the way in which Australia has welcomed migrants to our great nation from all corners of the globe and, by accepting their diverse cultures, ensured their commitment to Australian institutions.

Friends

Never have you had a clearer choice.

Never have you faced a starker contrast.

The Liberal/National Coalition seeks to deny opportunity and entrench privilege.

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The Labor Party will continue to enlarge equality of opportunity for all.

Look at our record.

Three years ago I gave my word that the Australian Government would adopt Australia's first National Policy on Languages. We did, and the achievements speak for themselves.

Migrants, both kids at school and their parents, have benefitted from greatly increased expenditure. Today it stands at \$162 million, up more than 50 per cent on the last year of the Liberal Government.

We have expanded our financial help for teaching community languages to your children. We have provided some \$23 million over the last 3 years for a Second language Learning Program, set up the Languages Institute of Australia, and increased funding for ethnic schools. Spending on community languages has increased fivefold under my Government.

Three years ago I gave my word that we would present a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. I know that many people were sceptical whether we would deliver. We did.

Last July my Government committed \$89 million to a series of concrete initiatives. As a result:

- . SBS television is being progressively extended
- . the barriers to the recognition of overseas skills and qualifications, of which many of you have had unfortunate experience, are coming down
- . a major campaign to improve community relations is being set in place - in spite, I am saddened to say, of criticism from the Liberals and Nationals.

Three years ago I gave my word that an Access and Equity policy would be pursued with vigour to ensure that the Government's programs and services would be equally available to all. We have fulfilled that pledge -

- . in 1989/90, the budget on settlement services provided by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs is \$127.5 million, more than 50 percent greater than in 1983/84
- . an extra \$3 million has been set aside to ensure migrants get equal access to community and health services, local government, and consumer education
- . \$65 million has been earmarked for residential care for ethnic older people

employment and training programs have been targetted to non-English speaking migrants, so that they have benefitted equally from our record levels of employment growth. It is a matter of fact that 1.6 million jobs have been created under my Labor Government: it is a matter of pride that a quarter of those jobs have gone to migrant workers.

Three years ago I gave my word that we would review our immigration policy and overhaul our outdated Migration Act.

We have.

It is a complex business, and the new regulations are at times confusing. It is for that reason that my colleague, Robert Ray, who has worked assiduously and with great integrity in the Immigration portfolio, has recently announced grants to Migrant Resource Centres to provide free advice on migration matters - to stop migrants being ripped off by unscrupulous profit-making migration agents.

I do not claim that our new regulations are yet perfect. Robert has made clear that some of the criticism has been fair. But he has also said, and I agree totally, that clearly defined and publicly available rules for decision-making will introduce more certainty, consistency and fairness to the operation of migration policy.

And I say also, loudly and clearly, that the hallmark of the Hawke Government is a willingness to listen to ethnic communities and - where necessary - to act. If there remain unintended consequences to some of the new regulations you have my word that we will change them.

Friends

Contained in the document before you today is a remarkable record. It sets out a path to a fair and tolerant Australia along which we will continue to stride undeterred by those who seek to change our direction.

In my next term as your Prime Minister, my Government will:

- . continue to develop further the National Policy on Languages
- . support a balanced program of second language learning for all, including for the languages of our ethnic and Aboriginal communities
- . establish a National Bureau of Language Services to provide better interpreter and language services across the nation
- . continue its high level of commitment to English language teaching

- . open up greater opportunities for overseas-trained migrants
- . give the Special Broadcasting Service its own legislative base and charter, and further extend the reach of SBS TV
- . provide traineeships for non-English speaking background Australians in the ABC and SBS
- . ensure equality of opportunity in education by expanding the Disadvantaged Schools Program
- . provide extra funding for special child care services to meet the needs of migrant children
- . maintain the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as an independent statutory body
- . and keep the Office of Multicultural Affairs within my own portfolio.

I am also delighted to announce today a bold, new initiative - the creation of a nationally networked ethnic radio news and current affairs service.

SBS Radio already produces excellent community language programs on 3EA in Melbourne and 2EA in Sydney. Public broadcasting stations - such as the newly established 3ZZZ in this city, 5EBI in Adelaide, 4EB in Brisbane and 6EBA in Perth - ensure that ethnic communities have access to the airwaves. Now, through the Public Broadcasting Foundation, SBS will be funded to produce objective, professional news and community information programs in at least fifteen languages and air-time will be bought from public stations to broadcast them.

In this way both the SBS and public broadcasters will benefit from additional funding of \$3.4 million over a three year period. More importantly, ethnic communities around Australia will be able to receive on a regular basis high quality programs in their first language.

It is not only the ethnic communities in our cities that will benefit from this measure. Communities - such as the Greeks, Italians, Turks and Vietnamese who are making such a valuable contribution in our rural areas - will now, some of them for the first time, be able to listen to radio programs in the language that they speak at home.

This is multiculturalism at work.

And what does the Liberal/National Party Coalition offer?

First, it offers funding cuts.

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Already the Coalition has announced that it will slash \$20 million from the budget of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs - \$20 million that might otherwise go on settlement services for migrants - \$20 million removed from the Immigration budget at the very moment the Coalition plans a significant increase in the intake of economic migrants.

And that, my friends, is only the beginning. As they themselves now admit, there would have to be draconian cuts in the second and third year to finance their pitch to the rich.

Second, the Coalition offers division.

Their policy proposes to treat some migrants differently from others. It would deny migrants access to our social security benefits for at least their first twelve months in Australia. No matter that they have chosen Australia as their home. No matter that they are subject to Australian taxes from their first day here. If they are not a refugee, then they would not be entitled to sickness benefits, not entitled to an invalid pension, not entitled to unemployment benefits.

At the same time, the Coalition intends to reduce the proportion of migrants allowed to come and join their families in Australia. Well may they talk of "the harsh reality". It is they who seek to create it.

And finally, the Coalition offers fear.

It fears ethnic communities. It is for that reason that it has attacked us for ensuring that our policies are presented in the ethnic press. While the Australian Labor Party is holding a special launch of its ethnic affairs policy, as it has in each of the last 3 elections, the Liberal Party has expunged the word "ethnic" from their election policy statement of last week.

You, my friends in the ethnic communities, are presumably not part of the Liberal 'Answer'.

It is perhaps fear too which explains why the Coalition seeks to make it harder for migrants to become Australian citizens.

I see that in an interview with SBS radio last week Mr Peacock sought to deny this was Liberal Party policy. I suggest that he take a break from glib sloganeering and actually read the Immigration Policy document of his own Party.

There it states, unequivocally, that under a Coalition Government, migrants would have to live in Australia for four years before being eligible for citizenship: four years, my friends, not two as is the case now.

In stark contrast, I was proud to launch in 1988 The Year of Citizenship. As I participated in ceremonies across our land, and as migrants came forward in record numbers to make their ultimate commitment to our nation, it was impossible not to feel elation. Here were people from 140 countries around the world, choosing Australia as their home. And, having chosen, participating - as you are participating - in our democratic traditions.

Friends - fellow Australians

The choice on March 24 could not be plainer.

Over the last few years the Australian Labor Party has stood by our ethnic communities when the going was at its toughest.

We will continue to fight discrimination and intolerance in any of their invidious forms.

We will continue to hold firm to our belief in multicultural policies to manage Australia's growing diversity.

We will continue to ensure that our programs and services are equally available to all.

We will continue to listen to the voice of our great ethnic communities.

We will always do so, no matter what the political cost. On that you have my solemn word.

Together, during my fourth term as Prime Minister, we will work together to build a fair, just and tolerant Australia for our children and grandchildren.
