



PRIME MINISTER

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ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER AT CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY, TOWN HALL,
SYDNEY

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today to witness your citizenship ceremony. I am sure that this is an important moment in your lives, and it is a proud moment for Australia. Around the country, at fifty or more ceremonies timed to coincide with Australia Day, our national day, 3,000 people from a score of different nationalities, will be becoming Australian citizens.

The granting of citizenship and its acceptance are acts of mutual respect and confidence. The grant of citizenship shows Australia's confidence in the ability of the people becoming citizens to make a valuable contribution to the nation. The acceptance of citizenship is a mark of the confidence men and women from other nations have in Australia, and their wish to identify their destiny with Australia. Citizenship does not require forsaking earlier affections and ties. A person can love Australia fully and participate productively and responsively in Australia's national life while retaining his affection for the country of his birth, treasuring its memories, its culture and its language. The people who mistakenly believed new citizens could only embrace Australia by denying their country of birth, and who were intolerant of those who refused to accept this point of view, are fortunately fast dwindling in numbers and even more rapidly in significance. Both Australia and our new settlers have benefited greatly from their association.

In the last 30 years, more than 3 million people from all the world's countries have migrated to Australia, seeking to make a better life for themselves and their children. They have been attracted by the opportunities Australia offers, Australia's freedom and its equality. People like yourselves have made an enormous contribution to Australia's development enriching Australia both materially and culturally. Since the great migration programmes were initiated in the mid-1940s, new settlers have enabled Australia to aspire to and achieve things which would not otherwise have been possible. Australia could not have made the economic progress she has, could not have undertaken the massive development works, enlarged so greatly her commerce, industry and agriculture, without the hard work of migrants from all countries. In terms of population, without the inflow of migrants, Australia would today be a nation of only ten million people occupying a country the size of the United States. We are in fact a nation of 13.5 million people, and one quarter of our people have either been born overseas or are the children of migrants.

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But the economic and demographic contributions migrants have made are by no means their sole or even their most important contributions to our society.

Migrants and their children have excelled in every sphere of cultural, scientific, intellectual and artistic life. Ethnic cultures have added a new dimension of diversity and richness to the traditions of those other migrants, the English, Scots and Irish. To focus totally on the positive side of migration for the migrant and for Australia, however, is to present an incomplete picture.

Migration has its costs for the migrant - as you will all know. The fact that one moves from one society to another imposes great pressures on the individual - even though he moves by his own free will in pursuit of his aspirations for a better life. The psychological and social tensions produced by migration are great, language difficulties are often severe and there are always initial economic difficulties to be faced without the support provided by family and well known friends. Going from one land to another with a different culture, history and often a different language is an act of courage - venture into the unknown. This is part of the reason we have placed so much emphasis on family reunion - so that migrants can join relatives who have already charted a path through Australian society.

Invariably, the migration experience involves a complex and difficult period of adjustment. There is a great deal that needs to be done to assist migrants to overcome the difficulties of the migration experience, and we are establishing the structures with which this can be more effectively done. We are acting to get greater co-ordination by all departments of the Commonwealth Government providing assistance to migrants. The formation of the new Ethnic Affairs Unit in the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs is intended to advance policies designed to secure the integration of migrants for functional departments and authorities to implement. Most departments have some responsibility with respect to migrant affairs, and we are placing special emphasis on meeting the needs of migrants. Particular attention has been given to extend the interpreting and translating services available to newcomers to this country who have difficulty in speaking English. We are seeking to enhance the resources of ethnic communities so that they can extend the services they provide to migrants. At the moment, we are beginning an imaginative experiment with ethnic resource centres in Melbourne and Sydney which should give us greater insight into the mix of Government and community involvement necessary for the most sensitive and effective assistance to migrants.

Ladies and gentlemen, Australia welcomed you when you came here, you have sustained yourselves through the difficult period of adjusting to a new society. It is a very real honour now to be able to welcome you as fellow citizens.
