



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

TO THE CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY IN WOODVILLE -
ADELAIDE - 1 AUGUST 1985

Lord Mayor, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you tonight to participate in this most important ceremony.

Those people who have received citizenship tonight come from very diverse backgrounds and from every continent on earth. Their act of commitment has been witnessed by members of their families, representatives of almost every ethnic organisation in South Australia, and by the community at large.

I congratulate those taking this step. Through this act of commitment you have the opportunity to become fully participating members of Australian society. We are proud to count you now as Australians.

You will be eligible to obtain an Australian passport and receive the protection that this affords around the world. Importantly, you will become eligible to vote and participate in the democratic processes. Maybe some of you may wish to join the Public Service or stand for election to State or Federal Parliament. Indeed one of you may aspire to take over my job as Prime Minister of this country. All of these avenues are open to you.

You have become citizens under the Australian Citizenship Act - an Act which provides the basis for the citizenship of all Australians regardless of their origin, culture or linguistic background. Under that Act people can become citizens by birth in Australia, by descent through birth of a child to an Australian parent living overseas, or by applying to become a citizen and electing to take part in a ceremony such as this one here tonight.

My Government has taken steps to ensure that the legislation does not discriminate between persons on the basis of their sex, marital status or present or previous nationality; we have also provided for review by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal of decisions to refuse citizenship under the Act; and are making sure policy in this area is thoroughly Australian in character. We aim to encourage new settlers to become fully participating members of our society as soon as possible. We have reduced the residential requirement from 3 to 2 years and have eased the English language requirement from an adequate to a basic knowledge of English.

From my earliest time of thinking about our great country I have judged much of that greatness, and potential for greatness, to be associated with our readiness to open up our land to those who would join us from other countries.

Australia has been immeasurably enriched by the contribution of immigrants to our national life. One of our nation's greatest achievements has been its acceptance of a wide and diverse range of people, regardless of race, religion or ethnic background.

The fundamental principle of my Government's migration program is that migration should continue to enrich our lives and bring social, cultural and economic benefits to our nation.

This will only occur if the program is carefully designed and well managed.

First of all as a responsible and humanitarian member of the world community, Australia has a duty to make an appropriate contribution to the resolution of the world refugee situation.

Secondly we have obligations to those Australians in our community who are separated from their immediate family (that is spouses, dependent children and aged parents,) and want to bring them here to join the family group.

For the rest, potential migrants must be selected on the basis of their likely contribution to Australian society if we are to maximise benefit, aid our economic recovery and make immigration more acceptable to the Australian community.

As more than one million people express an interest to migrate to this country every year we have to make choices carefully.

Our target level of immigration for 1985/86 is about 84,000. At a time of unacceptably high unemployment this level would not be responsible if it only added new migrants to unemployment queues and reduced job opportunities for the unemployed in Australia.

To avoid this, selection is oriented towards those applicants most likely to find productive employment in Australia without competing with the unemployed for jobs.

The increase in migration, therefore, in 1985/86 is focused on the economic categories - skilled labour, employer nominees and business migrants.

I believe that we will be able to increase migration levels further in the longer term as economic recovery strengthens, but only if we are selective and ensure that the program is structured in the short term to be of maximum benefit to our nation.

I am firmly convinced that a sensitive and carefully managed migration program of this kind will contribute to economic recovery and continue to enrich our society and our culture.

In this regard, my Government believes that it is vital that there be specially designed programs for new arrivals to settle successfully in this country. Since coming to office we have examined many of the programs which are provided for new settlers to ensure that they provide the best possible assistance for those in need.

For instance we have increased the Grant-in-aid scheme to ethnic community organisations; extended the adult migrant education program as well as those programs especially designed for migrant school children, and boosted the interpreter/translator services. A review of all aspects of the adult migrant education program is now under way.

We have done all this against the background of a keen appreciation that the commitment to this country our new citizens are making - their full identification with this nation - imposes obligations and responsibilities on all of us.

The commitment of citizenship we have witnessed tonight is important for the health of the nation and is necessary for full participation in the Australian community.

On behalf of all Australians I welcome you as new citizens and hope that you are able to contribute as much to this country as the generations of migrants that have gone before you.
