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## PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY  
PRESTON - 19 JULY 1988**

At the outset, I want to offer my congratulations to the true guests of honor of today's ceremony - the 103 people who are about to become citizens of Australia.

As a group, you represent an enormous diversity of people and nations. You have come from twenty five different countries -

from Europe, Asia, the Pacific and the Americas;

from countries as large as the United States and as small as Mauritius;

from a country as old as democracy itself, Greece, and from Italy, one of the cradles of Western civilisations;

from places which have been the source of Australian settlers for all of our two hundred years of continuous settlement, that is the United Kingdom and Ireland, and from our newer sources of immigrants, such as Korea and Lebanon.

Let me, for the record, list the background of all the people here today. There are nineteen Yugoslavs, sixteen Italians, thirteen Britons, ten Greeks, and people from Argentina, Albania, Chile, Cyprus, East Timor, Fiji, India, Ireland, Korea, Lebanon, Malta, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, the Philippines, Romania, Turkey, the USA, and Vietnam.

So you represent most of the major ethnic communities in Australia and a large number of the smaller ones.

In short, you represent in your diversity the diversity of the world.

But for all your diversity as a group, you have all as individuals arrived at the same decision.

For all your different ages and backgrounds and lengths of time spent in Australia, you are all about to make the same commitment - by taking on the same rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

And it is for that reason - that tremendous decision you have taken and you are about to implement - that I offer you my most sincere congratulations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to take the opportunity of this citizenship ceremony to say something about my Government's thinking on the broad issues of citizenship -

about what it means to become citizens of Australia, and what it means to Australians to welcome newcomers as our fellow citizens.

Last week in Canberra I had the pleasure of playing host to the Prime Minister of Ireland, Charles Haughey, who was visiting Australia as part of our Bicentennial celebrations.

A very large number of Australians of course proudly claim an Irish heritage. In the Parliamentary dinner held in honor of Mr Haughey's visit in the Great Hall of the new Parliament House, I said that like so many people who had come to settle in Australia from overseas, Irish Australians retained - as they should - the love of their land of origin.

But for the Irish-Australians, as it is for so many new settlers in Australia, what is paramount is the commitment to their new home, to Australia.

In a similar vein, I had the memorable experience in Sydney earlier this year of speaking at a dinner of the Lebanese community.

Present at the dinner were representatives of the entire spectrum of Lebanese Christian and Muslim groups, meeting together in an atmosphere of harmony and community spirit.

The point is that they, too, have left behind them the bitterness and divisiveness which so tragically afflicts their homeland, and have devoted themselves, together, to building a better Australia.

As I put it in my speech to the nation on Australia Day - Australia's bicentennial day - it doesn't matter whether your family has been in Australia for 40,000 years or for seven or eight generations, or whether you have just arrived.

What does matter is whether you are committed to Australia.

We are, and essentially we remain, a nation of immigrants - a nation drawn from 130 nations as well as from one of the world's oldest cultures, the Australian Aboriginal culture.

It is this very diversity that makes us special among the nations of the world, and that makes us a strong and resilient community.

Because from the day the First Fleet arrived - through the fever of the Gold Rush - through the growth into nationhood and the sacrifice of two world wars - through the massive surge of immigration after 1945 as we built the foundations of a modern economy - and through the trauma of the Vietnam War and its aftermath - Australians for the entirety of our two hundred years of national development have had to accept the fact of our racial and ethnic diversity.

I do not pretend that diversity has always been fully appreciated, or that newcomers have been made as welcome among us as they deserved.

But I do assert that, fundamentally, what unites us is far greater than what may seem to divide us. We are united - by sharing a common land, sharing a common loyalty to the institutions of our society, and sharing a common aspiration to build a future of peace and prosperity for our children.

Throughout these two centuries the key to Australia's growth, the secret of Australia's success, has been the fact that regardless of their origin, people have continued to identify themselves as Australians - as you are doing today. And for two hundred years these people have made good that commitment to Australia by devoting their labor to the protection of our peace and the enlargement of our prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In pinpointing what makes us distinctively Australian we acknowledge the enormous debt we owe to Britain.

Britain has given us the basis of many of the institutions of our free society: our system of Parliamentary democracy, the principles of rule by law and the protection of the rights of the individual under the law, our system of liberal education.

English is our national language and we provide the means to those from different language backgrounds to acquire skills in English. British migrants continue to come to Australia in large numbers and to be very welcome among us.

And we also need to acknowledge the great enrichment our society has received from people of other nations and civilisations.

I have mentioned the Irish, whose great contribution goes back 200 years. And I want to pay tribute to those who have come here, particularly since the Second World War, from such countries as Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Malta, Poland, Germany, Lebanon, Turkey, and, more recently, from Vietnam and other Asian countries, and Latin America.

We should recognise that circumstances have often been difficult for such communities. But notwithstanding residual pockets of racism and prejudice, those communities

are now widely recognised as having made a tremendous contribution to Australia and are very much welcomed here. On behalf of the Government, I want to say that they will continue to be welcome here and their fellow countrymen and women will continue to be welcome here.

In surveying Australia today, it is perhaps invidious to single out the contribution of particular immigrants for mention. But some names readily spring to mind.

Names like that of Dr Victor Chang, the eminent transplant specialist, who has devoted himself to saving the lives of his fellow Australians, whatever their background;

Or Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, who not only has played a major role in the development of Australian industry, and in patronage of the arts, but who now, in his support for the Australian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, is proudly proclaiming his adopted country to his country of origin;

Or Alex Tzannes, the eminent Australian architect responsible for the design of the Bicentennial pavilion in Centennial Park, Sydney; or Imants Tillers who painted the mural within it;

Or Jenny Kee, whose exciting and innovative designs have introduced Australian motifs and colour to the world fashion scene; or Judy Cassab, one of Australia's most distinguished artists, twice winner of the Archibald Prize; or Dr Alessandra Pucci, Qantas Businesswoman of the Year.

Or in the field of sporting prowess, an area of passionate interest to so many Australians, where immigration has had a tremendously beneficial effect on our country. What Australians of diverse backgrounds can achieve together has been shown in the past few days by the likes of Frank Arok and Eddie Thomson, Charlie Yankos and Paul Wade, Vlado Bozinovski and Scott Ollerenshaw, Frank Farina and Graham Jennings, Oscar Crino and Alan Davidson, wearing the green and gold of Australia with pride and distinction.

Being Australian is not determined by where you come from, or how you dress, or what you eat, or what sport you play.

It is not determined by the language that you speak at home or the religion that you practice. It is not determined by the colour of your skin.

It is only determined, as the contribution of so many new settlers proves, by your commitment to Australia.

What is that commitment?

The ultimate expression of commitment is contained in the Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance that is about to be made by one hundred and three people.

The words of this undertaking require a declaration of allegiance to the Queen - not the Queen of Great Britain but the Queen of Australia, the Head of State of a mature and independent nation.

The words of the undertaking also require a promise to observe the laws of Australia and fulfil the duties of an Australian citizen.

Last year, that commitment was made by nearly 75,000 people - and we applaud their decision. But remarkably, there are still an estimated one million Australian residents who are qualified to become Australian citizens but who have not done so.

We do not seek to make citizenship compulsory, and we will not make it so.

But I do want to use this opportunity to urge as many people as possible to follow your example - to express their commitment to Australia by taking on the rights and the responsibilities of Australian citizenship.

Such a commitment is entirely consistent with our policy of multiculturalism: accepting and celebrating our diversity and forging it into a unified Australia.

A multicultural Australia is one in which Australians have an equal right to participate in all aspects of the nation's life. Just as importantly, it is one where all Australians are encouraged to take up an equitable share of the responsibilities for the country's future.

This concept of multiculturalism has come in for some ill-informed criticism in recent times; ill-informed criticism that is sometimes accompanied by crude stereotyping.

The policy of multiculturalism is not, as is frequently alleged, an attempt to fragment Australian society or to create ghettos. It recognises the fact of diversity in Australia and the socially enriching value of diversity.

But our policy of multiculturalism also insists that all Australians, of whatever origin, accept the overarching principles and institutions which make us one single nation.

Multiculturalism does not seek to import or entrench division into the Australian community. And I reject utterly any suggestion that it has in fact done so.

It is unfortunate that much of this criticism has followed on from the release of the FitzGerald Report on Australia's Immigration Policies - a Report which was commissioned as

part of the Government's continuing monitoring of the role of immigration in the development of Australia.

Let me emphasise that the Report has not even been considered, let alone adopted, by the Government and in no way constitutes "a blueprint for Government policy" as it has been described in the press in the past couple of days.

The Government is currently undertaking a wide series of consultations on the Report's recommendations, and it would not be proper for me to pre-empt this process by discussing the Report or its recommendations tonight.

But it is right, indeed it is necessary, that I say this. If those who, for whatever reason, have embarked on a deliberate campaign of misinformation about our policies on immigration or multiculturalism hope that they will thereby overturn them, then they are badly mistaken.

There will be no return to the past. The White Australia policy is dead and buried.

The central principles of our immigration policies are non-negotiable. Immigration will continue to be based on our national interest. It will continue to be non-discriminatory. Family reunion will remain a vital component of it. We will continue to play our part in meeting the great humanitarian obligation to provide a haven for refugees fleeing oppression overseas.

Despite all our history of immigration, despite all the contributions to Australia by immigrants, despite all the promise the future holds, there are those who want to be taken seriously when they say Australia should turn its back on many of its rich sources of immigrants.

But who would dare tell me that this very electorate of Wills - which is one of the most ethnically diverse in Australia - is not distinctly Australian? Who seriously claims it is not - as some would have it - "authentically" Australian?

Let us face facts: The idea that Australia would be somehow better off if it had drawn new settlers from some countries alone is absurd and repugnant. We should all proclaim this loudly and without hesitation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude as I began by addressing some comments directly to the 103 people who are about to become Australian citizens.

Each of you brings to these offices in Preston a life story which is the stuff of human drama.

You come from different backgrounds and different individual circumstances. When you leave you will go to different homes, different jobs.

But to put these individual differences to one side for a moment, it is clear you have all come for basically the same reason.

You have come because you seek the special qualities of peace, prosperity and harmony which characterise the Australian lifestyle.

As Prime Minister of Australia I sincerely and wholeheartedly welcome your decision to take up Australian citizenship.

As the local member for Wills I express my pride at your new commitment to Australia.

And as a citizen of Australia I welcome you as my fellow-citizens.

When you leave today, you will be taking with you all the rights and all the obligations of Australian citizenship.

I urge on you the task of helping ensure Australia remains peaceful - remains prosperous - remains harmonious - so that it remains what I assert it is - simply, the greatest nation in the world.

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