



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY
FAIRFIELD - 23 AUGUST 1989**

Distinguished guests,
Fellow citizens,

Let me first of all extend my congratulations and thanks to the Fairfield City Council for organising this important ceremony today.

More than forty years ago, on 30 September 1948, the then Australian Government - I record with pride that it was a Labor Government - introduced into Parliament the Nationality and Citizenship Bill. When this legislation became law it established for the first time one of the most powerful and vigorously constructive forces in the Australian community: the principle of Australian Citizenship. That law initiated a process under which in the succeeding years more than two million people - an average of 1,000 people every week - have taken on the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizenship.

To mark the fortieth anniversary of this Bill, and to give extra encouragement to this vital process of citizenship, I launched, on 30 September 1988, the Year of Citizenship. Throughout the Year, my Ministers and I have attended citizenship ceremonies like this in every part of Australia, raising the level of awareness in the community about the importance of Australian citizenship and encouraging Australian residents to become citizens.

So it is a real pleasure to announce that over the financial year 1988-89 a record 114,977 persons have applied for Australian citizenship. Thirty of those people are here today. A measure of the impact of the Year of Citizenship is provided by the fact that in this last financial year more long-term residents applied for citizenship than in any previous year.

But the Year of Citizenship is not a one-off effort.

There are still too many Australian residents who are qualified to become Australians citizens but who have not done so.

So I want to use this opportunity today to urge as many of them as possible to follow the example of the 30 new citizens here - to express their commitment to Australia by taking on the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens.

Those who are becoming citizens today have many different histories. They have come here from many different nations - Poland, Argentina, Iran, Malta, the Philippines, Chile, Lebanon, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Peru, Uruguay, and the United Kingdom. In their diversity they represent the diversity of Australia.

Let me say directly to these 30 Australians: I recognise, and I think everyone recognises, the magnitude of the decision you have made.

The decisions to come to Australia, and then to take up Australian citizenship, are among the greatest decisions one could make in a lifetime. You have chosen to make a public commitment to your new homeland - a conscious declaration of loyalty - that those of us who were born here rarely have occasion to make.

Being Australian means many things. It means sharing an identity as Australian. It means taking responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the prosperity of our nation and the harmony of our society. It means accepting our parliamentary institutions, the rule of law, freedom of speech, our values of tolerance. It means having pride in the diversity of our multicultural society and in the values of fairness, equity, tolerance and a fair go for all.

Above all else, being Australian means having a commitment to Australia. The way you look, the way you dress, the faith you observe, the place where you were born are irrelevant to the question of whether you are an Australian. What counts is commitment - and that's what you have displayed in abundance today.

Australia is, of course, predominantly a country of immigrants. Immigration has been a major source of population increase since 1788. Four out of every ten Australians today are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Half of them come from non-English speaking countries. Two million Australians speak a language other than English at home.

In short, we are one of the most diverse, multicultural nations on earth. And Fairfield itself would be one of the most multicultural areas, with one of the highest proportions of overseas born residents in Australia. People from over 100 different nationalities have made their homes here - some born overseas and some, like you Mr Mayor, born in Australia of parents who emigrated to make a new life in this country.

3.

I see that reflected in the faces around me today. They are faces of almost every continent, race, religion, culture, language and society in the world. Indeed, if someone were to ask me what multicultural Australia is like, I could simply answer - come to Fairfield, and see for yourself.

As far as Australia is concerned, this diversity has been a great source of new talents and ideas, a catalyst for social dynamism, a true source of wealth in both its cultural and economic senses.

The contribution that our immigrants have made to this country is enormous. You only have to look around you to see it in the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the buildings we live and work in, the machines we use.

Here in Fairfield we have children from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds growing up as young Australians. These children are learning to live in harmony with each other. They don't get themselves tied up in knots trying to define multiculturalism - they simply live it, every day of their lives, in the playgrounds and on the streets.

Some people however see diversity as a threat to our social cohesion. They would seek to turn the clock back to the days of discrimination on the basis of the colour of one's skin or the country of one's birth.

But we can't turn the clock back and I for one would never want to.

The White Australia Policy must stay in the history books where it belongs.

All Australians should enjoy the rights and carry the responsibilities of life in this nation. All of us are equally entitled to a fair go and to Government services. All of us should have the opportunity to make use of our skills and talents.

These principles are encapsulated in the National Agenda for Multicultural Australia which I announced last month.

The National Agenda involves commitments of some \$55 million over three years and more than \$75 million in total.

They include:

- new arrangements to assess overseas qualifications which will prevent the wasteful squandering of immigrants' skills;
- a package of measures to improve Australia's language skills; and
- a three year community relations campaign to tackle personal prejudice and intolerant behaviour.

It remains the challenge of our generation to complete the transition to a new, multicultural Australia. We are all part of it and we are all, in our way, contributing to it. The National Agenda provides a new focus and a new direction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by quoting the first of the goals proposed by the Advisory Council for a Multicultural Australia: "All Australians should have a commitment to Australia and share responsibility for furthering our national interests".

Those of you who are becoming citizens today are making a public declaration of this commitment. You join more than one hundred thousand others who have taken this pledge during the Year of Citizenship.

You represent many different backgrounds and many different histories. But you all have in common the wish to declare yourselves as Australians.

As Prime Minister of Australia I am proud to welcome you as Australians and as fellow citizens, and I wish you well in all you do in the future.

Just as the trees you are to be given will grow and prosper, so I trust will your commitment to, and success in, this nation thrive in the years ahead.

From here let us work together, combining our talents, to build a cohesive, tolerant multicultural society and to ensure this great nation of Australia remains in the future what it surely is today - the greatest nation on earth.

FOI

I
Th
as
19
Ch
se
be

Au
in
re
pr
no
vi

Th
rc
th
up
pe
vj
tl

Of
ec
in
er

A
ac
wi
of
tl

D
C