

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(337) Program 6.1: Multicultural and Citizenship Services**

Senator Cash asked:

How does the Department evaluate if they have produced a “model” Australian citizen?

*Answer:*

There is no definition of a ‘model Australian citizen’, whether by birth or acquired. Australia has one of the highest citizenship rates amongst the OECD countries. At the time of the 2006 census, there were almost three million migrants living in Australia who reported themselves to be Australian citizens, indicating a figure equivalent to a citizenship take-up rate of 68 percent of the 4.4 million migrants that responded to the census. This is 20 percentage points high than the OECD average, slightly lower than Canada and well above that of the United States of America.

There are five different ways to acquire Australian citizenship: by birth, by conferral, by descent, by adoption and by resumption.

A person who has acquired Australian citizenship by conferral must have met the relevant legislative requirements. These include:

- meeting the residence requirement,
- proving their identity,
- passing the citizenship test (if aged between 18 and 59) or attending a citizenship interview,
- being of good character and, if approved,
- attending a citizenship ceremony and taking the citizenship pledge.

During 2009-10, nearly 120,000 persons from more than 190 countries acquired Australian citizenship by conferral.

Australia’s multicultural policy, *The People of Australia*, provides guidelines for individuals and communities to practice citizenship at its fullest, thereby benefiting Australia well into the future.

The policy emphasises that Australia’s democracy is built around shared rights and responsibilities which are not only fundamental to living in Australia, but also enshrined in our citizenship pledge. These rights and responsibilities include:

- loyalty to Australia and its people
- upholding Australian laws and democracy; and
- respecting Australia’s rights and liberties.