

Gary Hardgrave MP
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister

Australian Citizenship: Then And Now

Speech to the Sydney Institute, Wednesday 7 July 2004

Introduction

Tonight I will talk about Australian Citizenship and national identity, and the Howard Government's commitment to bringing the 55-year old Citizenship Act into line with the reality of modern Australia. The changes I will announce this evening, focus on maintaining the integrity of our national unity and the status which comes from becoming an Australian citizen while broadening eligibility to welcome back into the family many of those who may have lost their birthright while living overseas. Firstly, I will provide the context and set the scene for what Australian Citizenship means and has meant to us as a nation.

Our migrant heritage

Australia is a nation enriched and strengthened by our cultural diversity, a result of successive waves of migrants to our shores. Since 1945 we have welcomed more than 6 million immigrants to help build the nation we enjoy today.

Migrants have come to Australia because of the freedoms we cherish, our democratic system, and the values of equal opportunity and hard work on which our nation has been built.

Any socially cohesive society must feature the principles of rights and privileges balanced by respect and responsibilities. In Australia, individual cultural heritage is predicated upon an overriding loyalty to Australia and the basic structures and values of Australian society.

There is no doubt there are threats to Australia and our way of life in the post 9/11 era. There are those whose aim is the destruction of our way of life and values. Terrorists hate the freedoms of our democracy.

As a people, we come from around 200 countries of origin. Yet despite our linguistic, cultural and religious diversity and with 23% of us born overseas, we have worked hard to maintain our strong sense of national unity.

As foreign conflicts divide the world, our community seems to have a renewed sense of common purpose, which brings us closer.

The key to national unity is citizenship. The glue holding our culturally diverse society together.

One way to help protect Australia in these uncertain times, is through a coherent set of national values, the unifying effect of the common bond of Australian Citizenship and a focus on building a shared future which we all have a stake in.

National values

As Australians we have a responsibility to uphold and to take an active part in our vigorous democracy and system of government. This means valuing parliamentary democracy and the Australian Constitution, freedom of speech and religion, the rule of law, acceptance and equality, and English as the national language.

The great success of Australia's cultural diversity has been built upon our Western Christian society. Though we have a distinctly Australian culture and national identity, there is no point in denying our nation's history and its roots.

Just as Indigenous Australians have contributed significantly to our country, we must also acknowledge that British-style Parliamentary Democracy is at the heart of the framework of our national values and laws. At the same time, there is no doubt migrants from many countries and cultures have enriched our society and built our modern, culturally diverse nation.

Diversity brings with it significant economic benefits.

We are now part of a global trading environment and the importance of trade and investment to Australia's prosperity continues to rise.

Australia's diverse population and workforce is providing us with language skills; cultural understanding and knowledge; business networks and knowledge of business practices and protocols in overseas markets. Not to mention low-cost intelligence about overseas markets, including intimate knowledge of consumer tastes and preferences.

Some twelve of the top 15 Australian export markets are Non-English speaking countries.

43% or about 8.8 million consumers in the domestic market are either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.

I believe this makes us unique and that as a result Australia is, arguably, one of the most successful culturally diverse nations in the world.

Recommitting ourselves to the values which underpin us as an open democratic society, particularly respect, good will and understanding between Australians of all backgrounds should be encouraged. These are the values which have attracted migrants from all over the world. This is particularly important not only in the promotion of civics but in helping to instil pride in our great nation.

We inform migrants about Australian values before and after they arrive and ensure they understand our culture and the concept of mutual obligation.

Schools need to reflect broader society and should be places where our national values are emphasised. It is particularly important for young Australians to be given opportunities to develop an appreciation of what it means to be an Australian as well as celebrate our national identity and the values that unite and underpin us as a nation.

Singing our national anthem, "Advance Australia Fair" and raising our national flag in schools and at appropriate public occasions are also symbolic as a unifying force for all Australians.

Commemorative days and national celebrations have also become important in forging our national identity and all Australians, including newly arrived migrants and refugees, should feel free to observe and participate in days of national importance such as ANZAC Day.

The ANZAC tradition and the values it symbolises, such as mateship and the shared defence of freedom and democracy, belong to every Australian.

As a nation, we are united by our common values, by our national identity and by our Australian Citizenship which encompasses all that it means to be Australian.

Australian citizenship

Successfully managing our diversity means emphasising the unity we have and we do this through public citizenship ceremonies.

Australian Citizenship is the cornerstone of our society and the bond which unites us as a nation. Australian Citizenship is the unity ticket - the passport to membership of the Australian family.

The Australian Citizenship pledge is about loyalty to Australia and its people, its democratic traditions, respect for each others' rights and liberties and a promise to uphold and obey our laws. It's about responsibilities as well as the benefits of belonging and reflects our national ethos of 'a fair go' for all.

These values are also reflected in the affirmation that was developed five years ago in response to the many requests from Australian citizens who had heard the Pledge made by new citizens and wished to make a similar statement.

Since 1949, more than 3.5 million people from all around the world have become Australian citizens. Australian citizens must vote in elections, and take their turn if called on for jury service. They may apply for appointment to public office, stand as a Member of Parliament, represent Australia in sport, or join Australia's armed forces. They can also apply for jobs in the public service, which are generally limited to Australian citizens.

Only Australian citizens may obtain an Australian passport, and be assured of assistance from the Australian Government if required when travelling overseas. If their children are born overseas, they may register them as Australian citizens.

As the first ever Federal Minister for Citizenship, one of my greatest privileges is to read the numerous letters and e-mails sent to me by both current and potential Australian citizens.

Usually the authors of these letters are passionately proud of their Australian citizenship, or excited about the prospect of becoming part of our great family. But I also receive letters from people who are enthusiastic about citizenship but are frustrated by some aspects of how the law and policy work which limits their access to Australian citizenship.

I'm talking about the people who have lost their Australian citizenship by taking out another nationality, often unknowingly, and desperately wish to resume it to maintain their connection to Australia, but don't have plans to return to Australia to live in the immediate future.

I'm also talking about people who cannot access their Australian heritage because they or their parents found out too late about the need for registration as an Australian citizen by descent, and the age limitations for such registration.

And there are also the people who cannot meet the requirements for the grant of citizenship even though they have lived in Australia for many years and been closely involved in their local community.

This evening I am delighted to announce some measures which further enhance our national unity and will go a long way to completing the task of bringing the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 into the 21st century. These measures will also respond to the challenges of participating in a dynamic global environment by:

- giving former Australian citizens and their children access to their Australian heritage subject only to the requirement that they be of good character;
- removing the age limits for registration of citizenship by descent;

- requiring spouses of Australian citizens to meet the same requirements for grant of citizenship as other adult applicants;
- strengthening the integrity and improving the consistency of the discretions to waive the residence requirements in certain circumstances; and
- aligning the age at which people are exempt from the requirements relating to English language and knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.

Setting the context

However, before I tell you more about the changes, I want to canvas very briefly the history of Australian citizenship law and policy.

In 1948, when the Act was drafted, the population of Australia was around 7.8 million, Australia was in the early stages of post-war reconstruction and we were about to witness one of the most remarkable movements of people, which over the next decade saw almost one million migrants and refugees settle in Australia. Not since the Gold Rush period of the 1850s had Australia witnessed such a wave of humanity settling in our country in such a short space of time. Since then our population has grown to over 20 million, we have become one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, and our citizens are very mobile, pursuing seemingly endless opportunities for work and/or travel overseas.

This past Australia Day 2004, Australian Citizenship had its 55th anniversary, having come into effect on 26 January 1949 with the passage through Parliament of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*. This was no spur of the moment or unplanned legislation.

This was prompted by a spirit of nationalism and the desire to advance our Australian nationality. Until the Act was amended in 1969 and renamed the *Citizenship Act*, Australian nationality had no official recognition, in fact up until the amendment Australians were required to declare their nationality as British. In 1984 following the most extensive review of the Act since its introduction we became Australian Citizens only and ceased to be also British Subjects.

Australian citizenship policy and law has changed over time in line with our diverse population and society to remove discriminatory provisions and unnecessary barriers. For example, the distinctions between British subjects and Irish citizens and 'aliens' were dropped to establish equality for all migrants who wished to acquire Australian citizenship. In 1955 the Act was amended to include reference to husbands of Australian citizens, as well as wives, and in 1984 the two terms were replaced with a reference to spouses.

In 1973 the Act was renamed the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* - the name by which we know it today.

In February 2000, the Australian Citizenship Council, chaired by Sir Ninian Stephen, published a report entitled *Australian Citizenship for a New Century*. In the report, Sir Ninian and his distinguished fellow Council members sought to identify how notions of citizenship could 'best serve Australia and Australians'.

The Council's report concluded that Australian citizenship was a success story and that Australian citizenship policy and laws were working well. However the Council also agreed that our citizenship could be better utilised, both in its broad and legal sense. In particular they believed that more could be made of our Australian citizenship as a unifying force. To this end, the Council made a number of recommendations broadly based around invigorating and strengthening Australian citizenship. Two of the most significant recommendations were:

- to repeal Section 17 of the Act to allow Australian citizens to acquire the citizenship of another country without losing their Australian citizenship; and

- development of a nation-wide campaign to promote the take-up of Australian citizenship by eligible permanent residents and increase the awareness of the value of Australian citizenship in the broader community.

The Government embraced almost all the Council's recommendations. The repeal of Section 17 was accorded the highest priority, and this was achieved as promised at the 2001 election with the effect from 4 April 2002. Priority was also given to the promotion of citizenship and a highly successful campaign has been in place since 2001.

Changes

Following the repeal of Section 17 in 2002, planning for the 'tidy up' of the Act and development of a Readers' Guide commenced. However, it became evident that further changes to the Act would be desirable as a consequence of the repeal of Section 17, and to address some anomalies, which in themselves are minor but for the individuals concerned are of great importance.

Correspondence I have received as the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs has highlighted the need for further changes to the Act, and the need for a tidy up and restructure provides an ideal vehicle to effect those changes.

Prior to the repeal of Section 17, around 600 people per year came to the attention of my department as having lost their Australian citizenship by becoming citizens of another country.

The effect of the repeal of Section 17 has been very well received, as evidenced by the following comments:

- *'Thank you very much for giving me this wonderful opportunity to live my life as an Australian overseas'.*
- *'My mother, an Australian living in Canada, is so excited with this amendment! She has been waiting for it for 30 years.'*
- *'My love for Australia will not be jeopardised by my seeking citizenship of Canada. As a dual citizen I can continue to work towards stronger bonds between both nations.'*

Resumption

Repeal of Section 17 was not retrospective because we could not guarantee that there would not be unintended adverse consequences for Australians who had lost their Australian citizenship under Section 17 prior to April 2002. These former Australians continue to be able to apply to resume their Australian citizenship.

Of particular concern to former Australian citizens living overseas and seeking to resume their Australian citizenship is the requirement that they must intend to reside in Australia within three years. Over the last 18 months alone I have received some 340 representations from people who lost their Australian citizenship under Section 17. Many of them did not know they had lost their Australian citizenship until they applied to renew their passport or register their children as citizens by descent.

Some of them were children when they lost their Australian citizenship as a result of the actions of their parents.

Most have written about the importance of Australian citizenship to them, that they have close family and other connections with Australia, but for employment or extended family reasons they do not have plans to reside here in the immediate future.

In the post repeal of section 17 environment, the requirement to intend to reside in Australia within three years is out of step with the effect of the repeal: it achieves very little; it cannot objectively be tested; and in any event it is accepted that people's plans and intentions change over time.

It is time to align the resumption provisions to reflect the policy rationale behind repeal of Section 17. The Government will amend the Act so that a person applying to resume Australian citizenship in these circumstances need only meet a good character requirement.

Another group of former Australian citizens who have written to me about the resumption provisions are people who renounced their Australian citizenship to retain, rather than acquire, another citizenship.

Some countries require or have in the past required Australian citizens living in their country to renounce their Australian citizenship between the ages of 18 to 21 to retain their citizenship of that other country and access certain benefits and services.

Malta was one of these countries. In February 2000 Malta amended its law to allow for dual citizenship but before then thousands of Australian citizens living in Malta, many returning to Malta after the Second World War with their Australian born children had to renounce their Australian citizenship at the age of 18 to access entitlements and services such as free tertiary education; employment in the public service, armed forces, banks, etc; purchase of property and access to social security benefits.

As a proud Australian citizen, I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for young Australians settled in Malta to have to give up their Australian citizenship. I think this letter which I received from a former Australian citizen living in Malta sums it up:

'I was born in Sydney to Australian parents who divorced when I was still very young. My mother remarried to a Maltese national, which resulted in our moving to Malta when I was 12 years old.

In order to stay with the only family I knew, I was forced to take up Maltese citizenship at the age of 18 - or else leave the country by my twentieth birthday. This obviously resulted in the loss of my Australian citizenship - much against my free will...

... Although I could not officially remain an Australian, I have always considered myself to be one, and have kept many ties as well as making new ones...

I have been trying since 1990 to find a way by which to regain my Australian citizenship, and yet still be able to stay with the only family I know. At that time, any attempt to regain Australian citizenship would have resulted in the loss of my Maltese citizenship - with the subsequent return to the state of affairs at my eighteenth birthday. This situation has since been resolved by both the Australian and Maltese Governments accepting the concept of dual citizenship...

... I earnestly desire to regain my Australian citizenship so that I can legally call myself Australian once more as per my birthright.

To assist young people under 25 years of age in these circumstances, special resumption provisions were introduced into the Act in July 2002.

The alignment of the 25 years age limit with the age limit for registration of citizenship by descent was reasonable at the time. However, it provided no relief for those who had spent much of their childhood in Australia and regard themselves as Australian.

The Australian Government has reconsidered this issue and decided that the principles underlying the resumption provisions should apply equally, regardless of whether the purpose of

renunciation was to acquire or retain another citizenship and regardless of a person's age. The Government will amend the Act accordingly, and include a requirement that the person be of good character.

Currently there are no resumption provisions for the small number of people who renounce their Australian citizenship for a purpose other than to acquire or retain another citizenship. Some people are required, by their other country of citizenship, to renounce their Australian citizenship to get a security clearance, or to secure employment, in the country of their other citizenship.

The Australian Government will cater for such people by amending the Act to allow for resumption of Australian citizenship by people who renounced their Australian citizenship to avoid significant hardship or disadvantage.

Children of former Australian citizens

Loss of Australian citizenship by adults, under the former Section 17, had even greater impact on children born after the Australian citizen parent lost their Australian citizenship.

These people - and I say people and not children because in many cases they are now over the age of 18 - are in no different position to any non-Australian citizen living overseas. They are effectively denied access to their Australian heritage.

In October last year, I announced a policy change to allow for the grant of citizenship to children born to former Australian citizens. This change was very significant for those who had lost their Australian citizenship under Section 17, subsequently resumed their citizenship and were seeking to return to Australia with their children.

Following this change I received a letter from a Mrs Dearden. She said:

"I really appreciate your efforts in changing the law so that one of my sons could join his brothers in being Australian citizens.

Our family is now making plans to return to Australia permanently and this is in no small part due to the change in law on citizenship which will make this process much easier".

However, there is no provision for people 18 and over, who were born after their parent or parents lost Australian citizenship. Just imagine, you could be 19 years old, with siblings aged 15 and 17. You may all have had the same upbringing, all been born in the same country to the same parents. And yet you have a different citizenship, a different passport and different rights and privileges to your siblings simply because of your age.

The Australian Government will provide for the grant of citizenship to persons of good character and over the age of 18 years who were born overseas after their parent lost Australian citizenship under the former Section 17.

Registration of citizenship by descent

Another area requiring change is registration of citizenship by descent. Currently, Australian citizen parents living overseas are able to register their children born overseas as Australian citizens. However, the provisions reflect the unintended consequences of incremental changes over a number of years.

For example, Section 10B provides that a person can be registered as an Australian citizen by descent before their 25th birthday.

Whereas Section 10C allows people born between 26 January 1949 and 15 January 1974 to register as a citizen by descent, if they can show they have a satisfactory reason for not registering before their 25th birthday, under Section 10B. People born after 15 January 1974 are not covered by Section 10B and must be registered before they are 25 years of age.

This is crazy and all rather technical. Its best understood if we consider for a moment a family affected by the application of these provisions.

Mrs L is an Australian-born Australian citizen who moved to Israel and had three children. She and her family made the decision to leave Israel and resettle permanently in Australia. In 2003 she applied for registration of Australian citizenship by descent for all three of her children.

At the time of the application, her children were aged 18, 27 and 29.

Only two of Mrs L's children - the eldest and the youngest were granted citizenship by descent. Her middle child is not eligible to be registered as a citizen by descent.

You see, the eldest child was eligible for registration under Section 10C, having been born between 26 January 1949 and 15 January 1974. The youngest child, was eligible under Section 10B having applied before the age of 25. Yet the middle child was not eligible, having been born after 15 January 1974 and being over the age of 25 at the time of application.

This could not have been an intended outcome of the descent provisions. There were no doubt cogent reasons for the time limits for registration for descent when they were introduced, and there was clearly an assumption that those affected would know of the introduction of the provisions and decide whether or not to apply.

Mrs L genuinely did not know of these limits and frankly who could expect her to even in this internet age. I am aware of other families who are in the same position. The legislation could not have been intended to divide families, as it has in Mrs L's case but did.

So the Government will amend the descent provisions to remove the age limits and require only that if the applicant is 18 years of age or over they must be of good character. The requirement that if a parent of the applicant acquired Australian citizenship by descent the parent must spend a total of two years in Australia as a lawful resident prior to the application will remain unchanged.

Discrimination against children born outside Australia before 26 January 1949 to **women** who became Australian citizens on 26 January 1949 must also be rectified. There is no such discrimination for children whose fathers became citizens at this time.

Section 11 of the Act was intended to fix this anomaly, but only allowed a five year window of opportunity, that is between 18 June 1991 and 17 June 1996. There was an assumption that the people concerned would be aware of the time limit.

The Act will be amended to provide for the registration of Australian citizenship by descent for people born overseas before 26 January 1949 to a mother who became an Australian citizen on commencement of the Act on 26 January 1949 with no sunset clause.

Age limit for the English language exemption

Another quirk of the Act, also related to age, is the difference in the age-based exemptions from the requirements that applicants demonstrate an adequate knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship and a basic knowledge of the English language.

The Act, when originally drafted, provided an exemption from the English language requirement for applicants of any age who had lived in Australia for a minimum of twenty years. We could speculate that this was on the basis that if one had not learnt English by then it was never going

to happen. In 1969 the exemption was ceased and brought into line with the age exemption from the requirement to have an adequate knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship, that is 60 years of age or over.

However, older people continued to have difficulty and in 1984 the age at which a person was exempt from the English language requirement was reduced to 50 years of age and over.

Since then, all newly arrived migrants and refugees with less than functional English have been given a legal entitlement of up to 510 hours of free English language tuition. In March this year I removed Labor's old five-year time limit within which the AMEP entitlement can be accessed.

In recognition of the English language tuition available to new arrivals and the importance of English language to full participation in our society, the exemption from the English language requirement will now also be returned to 60 years of age and over.

Spouse provisions

The provisions for a person applying for Australian citizenship as the spouse of an Australian citizen also reflect the times in which the Act was drafted, and need to be updated.

In 1949, the Act provided for the grant of citizenship to the "wife" of an Australian citizen. There was no legislative requirement that the wife meet any of the requirements applicable to other applicants, such as being of good character and being a resident of Australia. There was also no requirement that the wife have a basic knowledge of English or an adequate understanding of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, so long as their husband had satisfied these requirements and was clear that there would be on-going support for the wife in those areas. Provision for the grant of citizenship to the "husband" of an Australian citizen was not made until 1955.

1984 saw the introduction of the term "spouse" and 1994 (only 10 years ago) the introduction of a requirement that the spouse be a permanent resident.

Current policy requires that applicants for citizenship on spouse grounds satisfy the same requirements as other adult applicants, and many spouses of Australian citizens do apply in their own right.

In the 21st Century, it is reasonable to expect an adult to qualify for citizenship in his or her own right and, with one exception which I will cover shortly, not rely on a relationship with another person.

The Government will therefore amend the Act to require spouses of Australian citizens and permanent residents to meet the same criteria as other adult applicants.

Discretion to count certain periods as permanent residence in Australia

The necessary exception that does rely on a relationship with an Australian citizen spouse is for the spouses of Australians who spend considerable periods of time working overseas. I'm sure we all know people who have worked overseas moving from one posting to another in connection with their employment with the Australian Government, an international organisation such as the United Nations, or even with the private sector. Some of them have non-citizen spouses and may even have Australian citizen children. Some of the spouses are very keen to acquire Australian citizenship but would have great difficulty meeting the usual residence requirements applicable to other applicants because they live overseas with their spouse and children.

The policy objective underpinning the residence requirements is the development and maintenance of close and continuing ties with Australia. The Government accepts that in the case of spouse applicants for citizenship, this policy objective can be achieved through the applicant's relationships with their Australian citizen spouse, children and extended family, and through return visits to Australia.

Consequently a spouse specific residence concession, based on a demonstrable close and continuing association with Australia and not residence in Australia, will be introduced.

To bring the Australian Citizenship Act into line with other Commonwealth legislation, including the Migration Act 1958, a definition of 'spouse' will be introduced to include a de facto spouse where the applicant was granted permanent residence as the de facto spouse of their current partner.

There are a number of existing discretions within the Act to waive the requirements for specified periods of permanent residence in Australia. These discretions need to be strengthened and applied more consistently to reflect the reality of globalisation and contemporary Australia.

Let me explain.

Under one of the residence discretions, a permanent resident applying for Australian citizenship may have time spent overseas treated as though they were present in Australia, if they were a permanent resident before departure from Australia and were engaged throughout their time overseas, in activities beneficial to the interests of Australia.

Over time, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal has broadened the scope of this discretion well beyond the policy guidelines. The result is that a person could conceivably spend just one day in Australia to become a permanent resident, and then be eligible for grant of citizenship two years later. All they would have to do is establish that there was some benefit to Australia as a result of their activities overseas.

On the other hand, a person who has spent considerable periods of time in Australia on a temporary visa must establish that they would suffer significant hardship or disadvantage if not granted citizenship and, under policy, must have been present in Australia continuously for twelve months as a permanent resident prior to application.

The temporary visa categories under the Migration Act 1958 are structured to allow people to reside in Australia on a temporary basis for specific purposes that benefit Australia. Such people include business executives and investors, academics, skilled professionals, persons with distinguished talents in the cultural world and some medical practitioners.

During their periods of temporary residence, many of these people and their families establish close connections with the Australian community and make a tangible contribution to the interests of our country. They may not suffer significant hardship or disadvantage by having to wait two years after the grant of permanent residence to apply for Australian citizenship, yet a further two years' wait after several years in Australia serves no real purpose in establishing their connection with Australia.

The Government has decided to improve the equity and integrity of the residence discretions by:

- requiring applicants who, following the acquisition of their permanent residence, have been engaged in activities overseas which are considered beneficial to the interests of Australia, to have been present in Australia for a total of twelve months prior to their application for citizenship;
- introducing a discretion to allow for a period spent overseas involved in activities beneficial to Australia, following the acquisition of permanent residence, to be treated as

- time spent in Australia if the applicant would suffer significant hardship or disadvantage of citizenship were not granted;
- introducing a discretion to allow for periods of up to twelve months spent in Australia on a temporary visa prior to application to be counted as permanent residence if the applicant was involved in activities beneficial to Australia during that period; and
 - remove the current policy requirement for twelve months' permanent residence prior to applications, for applicants who would suffer significant hardship or disadvantage if their periods of lawful residence other than as a permanent resident were not counted as permanent residence.

Conclusion

The need for the changes I have announced this evening is perhaps best reflected in the level of detail I have covered in outlining the rationale for the changes.

I am confident that the changes will improve the overall integrity and consistency of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*.

I am also confident that Australian citizenship will continue to play a critical role in maintaining Australia's success as a culturally diverse, strong and independent nation with clearly defined national values.

The Government encourages all Australian school children to celebrate the values that unite us as a nation and to use national symbols, songs and statements, such as the Australian Affirmation.

As Australian citizens you too have a role to play in promoting the value of citizenship within the wider community and particularly to the 900,000 or so residentially eligible non-citizens sharing our Australian way of life.

In this time of global change and upheaval, our newest migrants, particularly refugees and their families from war-torn Africa or from the former Yugoslavia, are recognising the value and status of Australian Citizenship which they are grabbing hold of with passion and enthusiasm as a statement of stability, of belonging, and of faith that the future will be a better one - filled with peace, harmony and prosperity.

There has never been a better time to become an Australian Citizen.

Thank you for giving me your time, I would now be happy to take any questions.