

Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Policy

Liberal/National Party Coalition, Multicultural Affairs and Settlement, Melbourne, Liberal and National Party Coalition, 1996.

Liberal/National Party Coalition Policy for 1996 Election-

A Coalition Commitment

Contents:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction, Priority Issues
- Multicultural Australia
- Consultation
- Settlement
- Employment
- English Language & Literacy Services
- Education
- Aged Care
- Women's Health
- Refugees
- Racial Vilification
- Small Business
- Multicultural Broadcasting
- Citizenship
- Conclusion

Executive Summary

Commitment

The Coalition is committed to maintaining and further enhancing Australia's unique and enriching cultural diversity within the framework of national unity.

The Coalition is committed to ensuring that all Australians are able to participate fully in our community, to realise their aspirations, and to achieve their full potential.

All Australians should be free to preserve, celebrate and share their cultural traditions within the framework of a socially cohesive, tolerant and harmonious nation united by common goals, values and an overriding commitment to Australia.

Consultation

The Coalition will strengthen the consultative arrangements necessary to achieve increased and meaningful community input into policy development and decision making.

Major decisions on multicultural and settlement policies and programs will only be taken after widespread community input.

Settlement Services

The Coalition is committed to the provision of a full range of settlement services to ensure that all newly arrived migrants are able to participate fully in an inclusive Australian society.

Settlement programs will have an emphasis on currently disadvantaged new arrivals, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

We will address the special needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants, with particular attention to torture and trauma counselling.

Community organisations will be encouraged to play a larger role in the provision of settlement services. We will provide an additional \$20 million over the next four years to enable them better to assist their clients.

The Coalition will continue its support for Migrant Resource Centres - an initiative of the last Coalition Government - and the important services they render.

Access and Equity

Despite the rhetoric, access and equity has deteriorated since Labor came to power.

The Coalition's access and equity strategies, to be implemented in cooperation with the States, Territories, and Local Government, will ensure that all Australians have access to all publicly provided services, without exception.

Australians from NESB who have disabilities will gain greater access to services through the provision of information, support and encouragement.

The strategies will also ensure an equitable allocation of resources to needy groups and communities.

Employment

Unemployment in Australia remains unacceptably high. It is even worse (half as much again) for jobseekers from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), and especially young people from NESB.

The Coalition will direct resources in ways to ensure closer targeting of programs intended to assist unemployed people from NESB to gain employment.

English Language and Literacy Services

A common language is the glue of a cohesive nation. It is important that all Australians, wherever possible, can speak English adequately.

The Coalition will give greater emphasis to English language and literacy services. We will increase the flexibility of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) to improve its effectiveness.

Funding of English language training and education will be increased by \$17 million over the next four years.

The Commonwealth Translator and Interpreter Services (TIS) will continue to operate to ensure access to all arms of Government.

Other Languages

The Coalition supports the encouragement and further development of Australia's productive diversity capacity, and in particular the rich resource of bi and multi lingualism.

We will encourage second and third language training, including through the operation of a thriving Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program, run in cooperation with the States and Territories.

Education

The Coalition believes in the fundamental right of parents to choose the best school for their children.

We will maintain our longstanding commitment to Federal assistance for non-government (including ethnic and religious) schools.

The Coalition's funding policies for non-government schools will expand the rights of parents to establish schools which reflect their cultural and/or religious values and beliefs.

Aged Care

Older Australians of overseas origins, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) can have special needs and encounter special problems.

The Coalition will give increased priority to the provision of aged care accommodation options for elderly people from NESB. This will include both residential and at home accommodation, and dementia specific services.

The Coalition will ensure that elderly people from NESB have fair and equitable access to community support services, and that these services are delivered in a culturally sensitive manner. We will seek to ensure that direct care staff are matched with individual consumers as closely as possible.

Women's Health

The Coalition will develop a range of measures to address specific problems in the area of health care of women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

In cooperation with ethnic communities we will encourage increased awareness of cultural sensitivities in the delivery of health services, including the detection of breast and cervical cancer, pregnancy, child birth, and psychological services.

Refugees

Refugee and humanitarian migrants have special needs which require particular recognition and attention by government.

The Coalition will ensure that priority is given to meeting these needs, particularly in such areas as torture and trauma counselling, health care, and language and skilled training. We will also ensure that specific cultural sensitivities are taken into account wherever possible.

The Coalition will establish a Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council to advise on the

appropriateness and adequacy of Commonwealth refugee services.

Racial Vilification

All Australians have a responsibility to stamp out racism wherever it occurs.

Australians recognise overwhelmingly that education is the only viable long term effective approach to the eradication of racism.

The Coalition will commit \$10 million to a two year extensive multi-pronged education campaign directed towards schools and other educational institutions, and the wider community.

Small Business

Australia's small (and medium) businesses are the backbone of our economy and the main source of jobs. People from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) are a very important part of the small business sector.

Small business has suffered badly under the Labor Government.

The Coalition will simplify fringe benefits tax, provide capital gains tax roll-over relief for small business, replace Labor's unfair dismissal laws, reduce the costs of doing business, and restore incentive.

Multicultural Broadcasting

The Coalition remains strongly committed to multicultural broadcasting, which provides for diversity in language, tradition and culture.

The Coalition is strongly committed to retaining the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) as a separate entity, and to maintaining existing levels of Commonwealth funding. We will continue to support triennial funding.

In addition, the Coalition will provide an extra \$10.5 million over three years to facilitate fast tracking of the extension of SBS Television's

coverage to 100 per cent of the population (now 75%) as soon as possible.

The Coalition also strongly supports the multicultural community broadcasting sector. The sector plays a vital role in the life of many ethnic communities.

The Coalition will provide an additional \$3 million over three years to support the further expansion of multicultural community broadcasting.

We will also consider the establishment of a joint SBS/Multicultural Community Broadcasting Committee to consider ways in which multicultural audiences can be best served through a more coordinated approach.

Citizenship

The Coalition will encourage all permanent residents to become Australian citizens.

We will expand and develop citizenship classes to provide potential citizens with information and knowledge of Australia, its history, heritage, symbols, institutions and laws.

The Coalition will overhaul citizenship ceremonies to make them more meaningful and memorable.

The Coalition will establish an Australian Council on Citizenship (ACC), comprising prominent Australians drawn from a broad cross-section of the community, to undertake a comprehensive and independent review of all aspects of Australian citizenship.

Introduction

The Coalition is committed to ensuring that all Australians, whatever their background, are able to participate fully in our community, to realise their aspirations, and to achieve their full potential.

Much has already been achieved in this regard. More needs to be done. Widespread consultation by the Coalition has identified several areas to which greater priority needs to be given by government. These will be addressed by a Coalition Government.

Australia is one nation built by people from many cultures. Within this framework, we are committed to giving all Australians the greatest freedom of choice in how they live their lives and how they preserve and share their cultural traditions.

Priority Issues

- genuine community consultation
- enhanced and more flexible English language programs
- ethnic aged care
- migrant women's health
- disability in ethnic communities
- high unemployment amongst particular migrant groups
- greater community involvement in services
- choice in education
- the special needs of refugees
- equal opportunity and non-discrimination
- encouraging citizenship and pride in Australia

Multicultural Australia

It is the basic right of all Australians, whatever their background, to participate fully in our community, to realise their aspirations, and to achieve their full potential. They should also be free, within the framework of an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to preserve, celebrate and share their cultural traditions.

Australia is a unique nation and a unique

society.

Australia derives great strength from its unity, yet is at the same time one of the most culturally diverse nations in modern history.

We have a rich heritage as a multicultural nation. Successive waves of migrants - and their Australian born successors - from some 200 countries throughout the world have forged a tolerant, harmonious, peaceful, freedom loving, just, stable and democratic society that is the Australia of today.

The Coalition takes great pride in its role in this achievement, with a proud history in the fields of immigration and ethnic affairs.

Coalition Governments presided over the arrival in Australia of millions of migrants in the 1950s, 1960s, late 1970s, and early 1980's. These periods spanned the greatest diversity ever experienced in our official immigration intake.

Coalition Governments opened up large scale immigration from continental Europe, the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and more recently Asia and the Pacific. We have played an important humanitarian role in the international community in resettling millions of people from war ravaged regions around the world.

Coalition Governments led the way in the abandonment of the White Australia Policy.

It was these actions by successive Coalition governments which have given Australia one of the most diverse populations in the world.

The Coalition welcomes and supports cultural diversity in Australia within the framework of a socially cohesive, tolerant and harmonious nation united by common values, goals and aspirations.

The 1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia enshrined a number of basic principles:

- cultural identity: the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
- economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians regardless of background.

The premises on which these principles were based are:

- that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interest and future first and foremost;
- that all Australians accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society - the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes; and
- that multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights: the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values, and to act in a peaceful, law abiding and tolerant manner.

The Coalition fully endorses these principles and premises, which were also endorsed by the National Multicultural Advisory Council in its 1995 report, *Multicultural Australia - The Next Steps*.

The next Coalition Government will ensure that all Australians, whatever their background, receive equal opportunity and equal treatment, free of discrimination or intimidation, within the framework of these principles and premises.

Consultation

All Australians have a right to express their views on these important areas of public policy.

A Coalition Government will administer its multicultural affairs and settlement policy in the open and publicly accountable manner that befits such an important area of public policy.

We will also strengthen the consultative arrangements necessary to achieve increased and meaningful community input into government policy development and decision making.

We will maintain regular consultation, and collaboration, on appropriate policy matters with the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, the various Ethnic Communities' Councils, community representative bodies, services deliverers, major agencies, centres and academics with interests in this area, and the wider community.

Major decisions on settlement and multicultural policies, responses to significant reports, such as those by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, National Multicultural Advisory Council, Civics Expert Group, and our proposed Australian Council on Citizenship, will only be taken by a Coalition government after widespread community input.

Settlement

The settlement process must ensure that all newly arrived migrants are able to participate fully, and without prejudice, in an inclusive Australian society.

The Coalition maintains an underlying and abiding belief in the continued process of nation building. A non-discriminatory immigration program, supported by the necessary level of settlement services, will be an integral part of Australia's future development and evolution.

The Coalition has a long history of warm, co-

operative and constructive relations with immigrants to Australia. We established the first settlement services for migrants. Many of these remain today as the basis for Australia's multicultural policies. It was the Coalition that set up the first English language classes for migrants, grant-in-aid worker programs, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) for non-English speaking background Australians, Migrant Resource Centres, and the first government agency to represent multicultural interests - the Institute of Multicultural Affairs.

Efficient and effective delivery of settlement services, in close co-operation with the States and Territories, will be an ongoing priority commitment of the Coalition.

We will further develop and adapt our multicultural programs in light of changing needs, to ensure improved access to them, and equity in their implementation. In particular we will give higher priority to the health needs of migrant women, and the needs of aging members of our migrant communities in both domiciliary and hostel/nursing home situations.

Services Provision

We remain committed to the provision of a full range of settlement services.

Under a Coalition Government the aim of the settlement process will be to ensure that all newly arrived migrants are able to participate fully, and without prejudice, in an inclusive Australian society.

The emphasis of our settlement program will be on currently disadvantaged groups, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

We recognise, and will address, the special needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants, with particular attention to adequate torture and trauma counselling.

With continuing unacceptably high levels of unemployment in many ethnic communities, the Coalition recognises the special and differing

needs of new settlers. We are committed to ensuring that they have the necessary skills to facilitate entry into the work force. In concert with our employment policies we will ensure that labour market and training initiatives are suitably flexible and tailored effectively to address the particular circumstances facing unemployed migrants. (See also section on Employment)

People from different cultural and religious backgrounds have differing settlement needs. We remain committed to facilitating both culturally and religiously sensitive settlement services.

We envisage a larger role for community organisations in the provision of settlement services. Where barriers in the community exist against ethno-specific groups, we will help to overcome them. Services such as arrival accommodation for refugees, and care for aged migrants may be more efficiently run by culturally sensitive, ethno-specific groups.

A Coalition Government will provide non-government agencies with greater opportunity for involvement in service delivery wherever possible.

To this end we will provide community agencies with an additional \$20 million over the next four years to enable them better to assist their members.

The Coalition reiterates its support for the ongoing role of Migrant Resource Centres - an initiative of the last Coalition Government - to provide important services to a broad range of ethnic communities.

We will allow more flexibility in the provision of such services, and will use a common sense, results focused approach. Wherever possible and appropriate we will favour community services provision over bureaucratic alternatives.

The Coalition favours the maximum degree of decentralisation of service delivery, so that the services can be more closely tailored to the

needs of individual clients.

Access and Equity

The basic right of all Australians to participate fully in an inclusive society, to realise their aspirations, and to achieve their full potential as individuals and as citizens of this nation can only be achieved when all Australians, whatever their backgrounds, receive equal opportunity and equal treatment, free from discrimination or intimidation.

The settlement and post-settlement process for migrants must ensure this. Meaningful access and equity, and social justice, must be a fundamental component of these processes.

The Keating Government has failed to match its rhetoric on access and equity with performance. Access and Equity has deteriorated since Labor came to power. The Government's own 1994 Access and Equity Annual Report contained strong criticism of government departments and agencies by many community organisations about lack of liaison and outreach, lack of cultural awareness and culturally appropriate service delivery practices, inadequate interpreting services, and lack of effective dissemination of information.

The Government's 1995 Access and Equity Annual Report reveals that there is a long way to go before these serious deficiencies are corrected.

The appalling level of unemployment amongst Australians from non-English speaking background (NESB) is another indictment of the Keating Labor Government's failure to deliver access and equity, and social justice. There is no greater denial of social justice than the denial of the opportunity to have a job. (See also section on Employment)

The Coalition's approach to Access and Equity is based on our fundamental support for freedom of choice and equality of opportunity. These beliefs underpin our commitment to meeting the diverse needs and choices of all

Australians. This approach empowers people to live their lives with dignity, self respect and greater self reliance and independence.

The Coalition will implement a Federal Access and Equity strategy on the delivery of services to all Australians, of whatever background. We will do this in close co-operation with the States, Territories and local government.

This strategy will ensure that all cultural groups have access to all publicly provided services - without discrimination. It will also establish an equitable allocation of resources to needy groups and communities.

The Coalition will enable Australians from NESB who have disabilities to gain greater access to services through the provision of information, support and encouragement.

Employment

Unemployment in Australia remains unacceptably high as a result of the failed policies of the Keating Government.

For jobseekers from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) the situation is even more appalling. For Australians from NESB the unemployment rate is 50% higher than for other Australians. For younger members of the NESB community the figures are even worse.

The government has contributed directly to the problems faced by NESB jobseekers. A recent ACTU study found that there had been an actual fall in the number of NESB personnel in no less than 28 Government departments and agencies. Worse, the study also found that only 9% of new appointments to the Australian Public Service were from a NESB, and that people from NESB were more likely to be made redundant in the restructuring of Federal departments.

Migrants from NESB suffer specific disadvantages when seeking employment. They include:

- lack of adequate and accessible information about the job market;
- lack of recognition of pre-existing skills brought by migrants with them to Australia;
- lack of language skills;
- lack of bilingual job-preparation and training courses;
- in some cases discrimination and negative stereotyping.

Jobseekers of NESB will benefit particularly from the regional and community employment focus and the greater importance given to employment outcomes under the Coalition's employment programs.

In addition a Coalition government will:

- ensure more effective use of funding under the Adult Migrant English Program for early training in English as a Second Language for migrants from NESB;
- provide funding for employment assistance to case managers and community organisations under more flexible and generic guidelines so that the real employment needs of migrants from NESB can be more effectively met;
- continue support for programs to raise the level of awareness in migrant communities of the availability of employment assistance;
- maintain support for effectively targeted programs such as NESB job clubs, New Enterprise Initiative Scheme (NEIS) and other employment assistance programs;
- maintain support for ethnic employment liaison officers placed with community groups to ensure that ethnic employers are aware of Commonwealth supported apprenticeship, training and subsidised employment programs.

(Further employment initiatives are contained in our Employment & Training Policy)

English Language & Literacy Services

A common language is the glue of a cohesive nation. People who cannot speak the common language cannot participate in the life of the nation as fully as they would wish.

It is very important that all Australians, wherever possible, from whatever background, can speak English adequately. Failure to speak and understand English can lead to disadvantage in employment opportunities, workplace safety, productivity and wages, and access to services. It also increases the isolation and dependence of ethnic women and the ethnic aged.

The Coalition fully supports the National Multicultural Advisory Council's stance on the primacy of English language training. The Council's *Multicultural Australia - The Next Steps* report stated:

Australian English is our national language, and at least some level of proficiency in this language is necessary for Australians of other language backgrounds to participate fully in the society, enhance their sense of belonging, and enjoy equity with Australians born of English-speaking parents. English language competency is widely recognised as the key to economic and social well-being.

The Coalition is committed to ensuring all migrants have the opportunity to gain this essential means of communication. We will give greater emphasis to English language and literacy services. We will ensure that the operations and eligibility criteria of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) are sufficiently liberal and flexible as to better utilise resources to achieve more effective and long lasting benefits for non-English speaking migrants.

We will allocate an additional \$17 million over 4 years to English language training and education.

The Coalition recognises that learning English for some (particularly older) migrants is extremely difficult. Our commitment to improved Access and Equity requires government service providers to offer reliable, efficient and reputable translation and/or interpretation services.

We will guarantee continued operation of the Commonwealth Translator and Interpreter Services (TIS) on a commercial basis. This will ensure access to all arms of government.

We will also ensure that the States are enabled to play their appropriate roles in the operations of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters.

Translation and interpretation services will be required to take full account of the cultural sensibilities of their clients.

Other Languages

The language of a person's country of origin is an integral part of their cultural heritage. The Coalition will encourage both children and adults in the maintenance of their original language.

We also recognise the value of having as many Australians as possible speak languages in addition to English. Multilingualism is one of our richest resources. It gives Australians the facility to participate more fully in the international environment. Australia's business, trade, foreign relations and tourism opportunities and successes can be advanced with such linguistic expertise.

The Coalition supports the encouragement and further development of Australia's productive diversity capacity.

We will encourage such second and third language training. We have a strong commitment to the maintenance of a thriving Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program, run in co-operation with the States and Territories.

Education

Education makes a fundamental contribution to the shaping of young Australians. It is through education that young people formulate ideas, gain knowledge, create understanding and obtain learning. It is therefore an important part of a young person's cultural development.

The Coalition believes in the fundamental right of parents to choose the best school for their children.

Choice in education will be a key Coalition goal.

The Coalition's funding policies for non-government schools will expand the right of parents to establish schools which reflect their cultural and/or religious values and beliefs.

We are committed to continued support for Federal assistance for non-government (including ethnic and religious) schools.

We have consistently supported ethnic schools and language programs which provide opportunity and encouragement to young Australians of all backgrounds to learn community languages and to gain enhanced understanding of cultural heritage.

We will also encourage State and Territory governments to have both primary and secondary schools provide second and third language courses as an integral part of young people's broad based education.

The Coalition is committed to the Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program as an important element of our education and languages policies.

In government the Coalition, in consultation with the States and Territories, will review the existing approach towards language maintenance for immigrant children, second and third language programs, and other areas of language education. There is a need for balance between

different components in this complex area.

(Further education initiatives are contained in our Education Policy)

Aged Care

Aged persons have a special place in our nation. They are a wonderful asset in terms of the wisdom, accumulated experience, and contribution to family unity and strength, that they bring.

At the same time, for many older Australians, age brings with it certain problems that as a society we must address fully.

The Coalition recognises that older Australians of overseas origins, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), can have special needs and encounter special problems.

Elderly people from NESB, for instance, often lose their English language ability. This is particularly the case if age is accompanied by dementia.

A major priority for ethnic communities and aged migrants is the provision of aged care accommodation options - including both residential and at home accommodation, and dementia specific facilities - that best meet their needs. Community based accommodation and domiciliary services provision should be designed to provide for culturally diverse requirements, wherever possible, and where the community desires it.

A Coalition Government will ensure that ethnic communities, including people who prefer to remain in their own homes, have fair and equitable access to community support services.

It is desirable for older Australians to maintain their independence and remain at home as long as possible. Commonwealth/State programs such as the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, and Community Aged Care Packages (CACAP) delivering services in the

home, are invaluable.

Community services of this nature must be delivered in a culturally sensitive manner, with direct care staff matched with individual consumers as closely as possible.

We are especially concerned to ensure that aged people from NESB have adequate access to translating and interpreting services, so that society does not allow them, and their needs and problems, to be ignored.

In co-operation with the States and Territories, we will guarantee that all older Australians will be able to maintain their personal security, dignity and respect. We will encourage them to continue to make a significant contribution to their interests and communities.

Women's Health

All Australian women are entitled to access to quality health care.

A Coalition Government will develop a range of measures to address the specific problems in the area of health care of women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

We recognise the cultural sensitivity that is required in the delivery of health services to migrant women. For some migrant women this is especially the case in the area of services related to the detection of breast and cervical cancer. Many women from NESB require increased knowledge and understanding of the importance of screening programs - where early detection is possible and can prevent high risk diseases, like breast and cervical cancer, from life threatening development.

Medical practitioners will be encouraged to increase their awareness of particular cultural sensitivities in the delivery of health services, including pregnancy, child birth and psychological services.

We are especially concerned to ensure that women from NESB have adequate access to

translating and interpreting services.

The Coalition will give priority to ensuring that health promotion is sensitively and sensibly targeted. We will work closely with ethnic communities to achieve this objective.

Preventative Strategies and Health Promotion

It is essential that messages about preventative health care and health promotion programs are targeted to all Australians. We will ensure that these messages are culturally sensitive and available in appropriate community languages in order to maximise their distribution and effectiveness.

(Further health initiatives are contained in our Health Policy)

Refugees

Refugee and humanitarian migrants have special needs which require particular recognition and attention by government.

Australians can take great pride in their role in resettling millions of refugee and humanitarian migrants from all corners of the globe.

Coalition Governments - sometimes in the face of staunch opposition from our political opponents - have facilitated the arrival and resettlement of refugees from war-torn Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America.

The Coalition is committed to a separate migration program for refugee and humanitarian arrivals. We recognise that these people have special needs in the settlement process.

Refugees frequently require additional settlement services to those available to other migrants. Many come from horrific personal and/or regional tragedies. Most are from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Without exception they are frightened. Almost all arrive in Australia in a state of poverty.

Australia as their new home provides them with the opportunity to rebuild their shattered lives and reunite their separated families.

The Coalition in government will establish a Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council - drawn from community representatives - which will be charged with advising on the appropriateness and adequacy of Commonwealth refugee services. The States and Territories will also be invited to participate in this coordinated Federal approach to refugee resettlement.

A Coalition Government will ensure that refugee and humanitarian migrants are not ignored or forgotten by government policies and programs. We recognise their special needs. We will direct resources to overcome their pressing disadvantages and hardship, so they too can fully participate in our society as equals. We will ensure the delivery of a full range of settlement services to refugees and humanitarian migrants, including torture and trauma counselling, health care, language and skill training and culturally specific services provision.

Racial Vilification

The Coalition yields to no one in the intensity of its abhorrence, and unequivocal rejection of, all forms of racism. The Coalition's record on this issue is exceeded by no other political party. In particular, it was a Coalition Government that led the way in the abandonment of the obnoxious and racist White Australia policy.

All Australians have a fundamental responsibility to stamp out racism wherever it may appear, in ways consistent with the maintenance, preservation, and strengthening of the basic values and institutions that are the cornerstones of our multicultural society, and our way of life.

The basic cause of racism is ignorance. Australians recognise overwhelmingly that education is the only viable long-term effective approach to the eradication of racism. Education attacks the causes of racism rather than the symptoms.

The Coalition will commit \$10 million to a two year extensive multipronged education campaign. The full details and content will be finalised after extensive consultations with ethnic communities, educators and other appropriate persons.

The campaign will be directed towards schools and other educational institutions, and the wider community.

Amongst other things, the campaign will enable community workers and community leaders to better assist their members resolve racial incidents, and understand their rights, particularly for recently arrived and older migrants of non-English speaking background (NESB).

The campaign will also address the extensive ignorance and lack of understanding of ethnic communities in Australia that exists in various quarters, including the media.

Small Business

The Coalition recognises and values the efforts of the millions of Australian men and women, many from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), who make up the small and medium business sector.

Australia's 860,000 small and medium businesses are the backbone of the economy, and one of the main sources of economic prosperity.

Their foresight, imagination and willingness to back their own judgement contributes 30 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product and generates employment for approximately 3.5 million people, or 45 per cent of the total work force. These are people with a strong work ethic and a commitment to succeed in a competitive environment. They reflect the independence and aspirations of many Australians.

Australia's rich and culturally diverse society is also strongly reflected in the make up of our small businesses. People from NESB comprise

some of Australia's most successful small business people.

The Coalition acknowledges the vital role these small businesses play in our local communities and national economy. Overseas business networks that are largely centred on small family businesses provide an important means by which immigrants can assist Australia to promote regional trade. Small business also provides many immigrants with the opportunity to use their entrepreneurial spirit.

Small business has suffered harshly under the Labor government. Businesses have been unfairly penalised, and business costs and regulations risen massively.

These difficulties imposed by the Labor Government have restricted small business investment, profits and jobs. The result is that bankruptcies are running at close to the levels recorded during the last recession and are nearly two and a half times the average level of bankruptcies in the 1980s.

The Coalition will relieve the burden on small business - the key to economic and employment growth.

We have already announced that we will reduce the provisional tax uplift factor from 8% to 6% at a cost of \$180 million. This will relieve the cash flow position of small business.

The Coalition will also reduce the complexity of the fringe benefits tax, provide capital gains tax roll-over relief for small businesses reinvesting the proceeds from the sale of one business into another business investment or an approved retirement deposit fund, replace Labor's unfair dismissal laws with provisions that are fair and equitable to both employees and employers, and otherwise reduce the costs of doing business in Australia and restore incentive.

(Further small business initiatives are included in our Small Business Policy)

Multicultural Broadcasting

Culturally rich and diverse broadcasting is the key to successful multicultural communications. The Coalition remains strongly committed to multicultural broadcasting, which provides for a diversity in language, tradition and culture.

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

The Coalition is strongly committed to retaining the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) as a separate entity.

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) provides multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society.

The Coalition will recognise and continue to support SBS as an independent, national, multicultural and multilingual broadcaster devoted to excellence and offering a clear alternative to the commercial and community broadcasting sectors.

The Coalition is committed to maintaining existing levels of Commonwealth funding to SBS. We will continue to support triennial funding, which has allowed SBS to plan for the future with a greater degree of financial certainty.

The Coalition believes that SBS is in the best position to decide the most appropriate language mix for its television and radio networks, bearing in mind its responsibilities as Australia's only national multilingual broadcaster.

The Coalition will actively encourage SBS to broadcast programs across the broad spectrum of human interests including news, current affairs, drama, sport and the arts.

The Coalition will also actively encourage SBS to produce, co-produce and broadcast local programs which use Australian talent and

provide an Australian perspective on multicultural issues and events. We will maintain the existing level of budget funding for SBS's Independent Production Fund.

The Coalition warmly welcomes the expansion of SBS Radio to all capital cities and strongly supports its ongoing roll-out into regional areas.

The Coalition will fund the SBS directly for its transmission costs on the strict condition that national coverage and existing service commitments to rural and remote areas are continued.

Captioning for the ABC and SBS

The Coalition has long supported the captioning of news and current affairs for the nearly one million deaf and hearing impaired people throughout Australia. The Coalition will match the Government's belated commitment to provide \$6 million over three years to fund closed captioning of early evening news broadcasts on the ABC and SBS. The Coalition will strive to further extend captioning services on the ABC and SBS in consultation with the deaf and hearing impaired community.

Expanding SBS Television

The Coalition will provide an additional \$10.5 million over three years to facilitate the fast tracking of the extension of SBS Television to all Australians.

The Coalition believes that, as a national broadcaster, SBS should be available to viewers across the country. We are therefore committed to extending SBS Television coverage from the current 75 per cent of the population to 100 per cent as soon as possible. As part of our strategy to expedite the roll-out of the SBS Television network, we will have particular regard to the demand demographics of the various unserved regions.

Multicultural Community Broadcasting

The Coalition recognises the vital role that the

multicultural community broadcasting sector has played in many ethnic communities throughout Australia. The valuable information, entertainment and cultural services obtained through multicultural community broadcasting allow ethnic communities to participate more fully in the Australian way of life and actively contribute to Australia and its culture.

In the last ten years, public funding for multicultural broadcasting has fallen from \$50 an hour to \$28 an hour. The Community Broadcasting Fund can now only provide support to 700 of the 1,000 hours being broadcast.

The Coalition will provide an additional \$3 million over three years to support the further expansion of multicultural community broadcasting.

The additional funding will assist in the costs of producing and distributing multicultural content and will provide the multicultural broadcasting sector with further training opportunities as well as assistance with operational expenses such as administration and staffing.

In order to promote greater cooperation between the national and community based multicultural broadcasting sectors, the Coalition will explore the establishment of a Joint SBS/Multicultural Community Broadcasting Committee to consider ways in which multicultural audiences may be best served through a more coordinated approach.

(Further initiatives are contained in our Communications Policy)

Citizenship

Pride in one's country and a true sense of nationhood can be enhanced by a better understanding of citizenship.

Citizenship is the ultimate expression of a person's commitment to a nation. It involves a two-way, reciprocal, commitment between the

citizen and the nation. It is a unifying symbol, especially in a multicultural nation like Australia. It is a genuine bond to a way of life.

All permanent residents in Australia will be encouraged to take out Australian citizenship.

In 1994 the Coalition proposed the introduction of citizenship classes to provide potential citizens with information and knowledge of Australia, its history, heritage, symbols, institutions and laws. This proposal was supported by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's September 1994 report entitled *Australians All: Enhancing Australian Citizenship* and by the Civics Experts Group's *Civics and Citizenship Education* report in December 1994. The Government has recently followed suit tentatively by commencing implementation of a program for citizenship classes.

The Coalition will expand and develop this program in line with our initial pronouncements. We will also look - in conjunction with the States and Territories - at disseminating similar curriculum material into schools to raise students' awareness of the meaning and value of being an Australian citizen.

Although the Coalition supports the principle of encouraging citizenship through national campaigns, the promotion campaign announced in the Government's 1995 Budget is excessive, wasteful and poorly targeted. We will maintain the citizenship enhancement campaign launched in November 1994, but we will redirect a substantial element of the 1995 Budget resources to more important settlement areas.

Citizenship is a privilege. It is not a decision to be taken lightly. There should be a clear commitment to a country before citizenship is granted. The nature of citizenship is very much one of rights and corresponding responsibilities. These responsibilities must be fully understood before the citizenship decision is made.

The Coalition will retain the existing requirement that a facility in the English

language be a prerequisite for all prospective citizens other than persons more than 50 years of age. One of the benefits of, and indeed criteria for, citizenship is that a person can participate fully in Australian society. A key to this is the ability to communicate in functional English. A common language is the glue of a cohesive and inclusive society. Without this degree of English language proficiency and orientation, people cannot access their rights, or fulfil their responsibilities, in the broader community.

As the taking up of citizenship is, and should be, an important event in a new settler's life, so should the ceremony be a memorable one. We will also overhaul the citizenship ceremonies, to make them more meaningful, dignified and memorable.

Given the national significance of citizenship, and in light of the Government's failure to fully respond to the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Migration's (JSCM) report *Australians All: Enhancing Australian Citizenship*, the inquiry into which had very restrictive terms of reference, a Coalition Government will establish an Australian Council on Citizenship (ACC) to undertake a comprehensive independent review of citizenship. The ACC's members will be prominent Australians drawn from a broad cross-section of the community, who are proud to serve in an honorary capacity.

The ACC will use the JSCM & Civics Experts Group reports as a starting point, to perform the first extensive national independent review of our citizenship regime. The ACC will thoroughly investigate the meaning and value of citizenship; examine the residency, language, cultural, age, and other legal and community requirements for citizenship; write a new Oath and Citizenship Act; address dual or multi citizenship proposals; the relationship of citizenship to immigration and settlement policies; and recommend to government how best to celebrate the 50th anniversary in 1999 of the introduction of Australian Citizenship. The ACC's review will incorporate a broad community consultation and awareness

campaign.

Conclusion

The Coalition is committed to maintaining and further enhancing Australia's unique and successful cultural diversity within the framework of national unity.

We stand proud of our record and history of achievement in the areas of immigration and ethnic affairs. We have presided over historic ground breaking advancements in government policy in these areas - from mass immigration from all parts of the globe to the pioneering settlement services.

We have a long standing continuing and enduring commitment to a diverse liberal democratic society based on freedom, equality of opportunity, tolerance, cohesion and peace.

We remain convinced that this vision for Australia is shared by all Australians, of all backgrounds.