



Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Introductory remarks

Mr Andrew Metcalfe
Secretary, Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Annual address on immigration and citizenship
Old Parliament House
Museum of Australian Democracy
Canberra
6.30pm 16 June 2011

Thank you Arja for that kind introduction.

I would like to join with Jenny Anderson in acknowledging the traditional owners of this land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you to this our second Annual Address on Immigration and Citizenship. I am very proud of this event, and very much hope that it continues as a significant event each year.

It is my great pleasure to make a few remarks this evening before introducing our guest speaker, the Lieutenant Governor of South Australia, Mr Hieu Van Le AO.

Before I do, I would like to acknowledge our Minister, the Honourable Chris Bowen MP. Thank you for being with us this evening.

I also acknowledge representatives of former ministers in the portfolio, representatives from the United Nations and other friends and partners of the department.

I would also like to welcome all officers of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, past and present, including former Deputy Secretary Philippa Godwin, along with the spouses and partners of our retired officers, and colleagues from other departments and agencies.

This event is, of course, organised in partnership among the ANU, the Museum of Australian Democracy, and my department. I'd like to acknowledge the effort of all staff from those organisations involved in preparations for this event and welcome them here this evening, particularly Professor Ian Young, the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, and Jenny Anderson, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy.

As I remarked last year, in introducing the first Annual Address on Immigration and Citizenship recognising the department's 65 year history, immigration issues have often been controversial in Australia. Indeed, these issues long pre-date the post-war migration program and the establishment of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

In my opening statement at the recent Senate Budget Estimates hearings, I noted that over the last few years there has been a very significant public debate and discourse about issues relating to asylum, about detention of certain people under the Migration Act, and about broader issues in relation to population. Some of this discussion has been based on fact, but unfortunately some has been ill-informed and has, on occasion, engendered public confusion.

This event, along with a number of other significant communication strategies, seeks to promote a more accurate and broader discussion of the 'immigration story' into contemporary Australia, to try to ensure that discussion is based on fact rather than fiction.

Debates about immigration policy are a feature of our Australian history and no doubt will feature predominantly in our future as we continue to define who we are as a nation. However, one thing that is an undeniable fact is that immigration has greatly enriched Australia. The Australia that we love and live in today is a very different place, a far stronger place built through great diversity, than the Australia of 1945 when the department was first established.

Earlier today, a number of us had an opportunity to attend a ceremony at the department's national office in Belconnen where we officially named the executive conference room the *Arthur Calwell Room*. The naming of this room recognises the extraordinary contribution to post-war Australia of the Honourable Arthur Calwell, the first Minister for Immigration. I was delighted at that ceremony to pay special tribute to Arthur's daughter, Dr Mary Elizabeth Calwell, and I am delighted to welcome her along to our proceedings here this evening.

Calwell's vision of nation-building has enabled Australia to become one of the most linguistically, culturally and religiously diverse nations in the world. His vision of a country built through migration has been realised. What began as a department with 24 officers – six in Canberra, six in Melbourne and 12 in London – has grown to a global organisation with more than 8000 people across 80 offices around the world. In the coming financial year the department will administer a permanent migration program of 185 000, we will issue more than four million visas, facilitate at least 28 million crossings of the Australian border by passengers and crew, and conduct around 120 000 conferrals of Australian citizenship.

The simple facts are that since the establishment of the department 66 years ago, shortly before World War II ended, we have facilitated the migration of more than seven million

people and the conferral of citizenship upon four million people. We have been extremely well-served by our migration programs, both permanent and temporary. Migrants come to succeed, not to fail. They fill jobs where there are shortages of skilled labour, boost workforce participation, and are net contributors to the Commonwealth Budget's fiscal balance. Our orderly and well-managed programs, week after week, bring doctors and nurses to regional areas, engineers and construction trades workers to new resource projects, IT workers to major financial centres, and help re-unite families.

Economically, our migration program has been, and continues to be, a backbone to many of our industries. But we are also a compassionate country, one that has a long tradition of accepting and resettling refugees. Since 1945 we have taken more than 700 000 refugees, one of whom, ladies and gentlemen, is our guest speaker this evening and it is with great pleasure that I now introduce Mr Hieu Van Le.

While Hieu was sworn in as Lieutenant Governor of South Australia in August 2007, his Australian story begins well before this as a refugee fleeing Vietnam with his new bride Lan, along with a group of others, who boarded a fishing boat and fled Vietnam in 1977.

Their rickety vessel made it to the coast of Malaysia where they spent time in a refugee camp while making repairs to the boat, before setting off to Darwin where Hieu began his long association with our great country. An association which has had a very significant and positive impact on many areas within the communities and organisations that Hieu has been involved with. An association that has enriched Australia in many ways.

Following the completion of his Degree in Economics and a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the University of Adelaide, Hieu embarked on a long and distinguished career with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). In 1996 he received the Australia Day Medal for outstanding service to ASIC in recognition of his contribution.

Hieu's contribution to Australia, however, reaches far beyond his professional career. He has been awarded the Centenary of Federation Medal for service to the advancement of multiculturalism, and in 2008 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Adelaide for his contribution and services to the community. He is the Patron or Honorary Member of a number of multicultural based organisations including the Australian Chinese Medical Association, OzAsia Festival, and the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia. His notable contribution to the community was further recognised on Australia Day 2010, when he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for his service to the community in South Australia.

Hieu, I'm delighted that you are able to join us this evening. Yours is a story that is unique, yet in some ways forms a common thread in our diverse Australian society, which has been built on the contribution of our Indigenous Australians, all who have come here since 1788, and their sons and daughters who were born here.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join with me in warmly welcoming the Lieutenant Governor of South Australia, Mr Hieu Van Le AO, to deliver the Annual Address on Immigration and Citizenship.

(Word Count 1318 or 11 minutes)