



Philip Ruddock MP

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

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Boost for Australian Citizenship

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The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Philip Ruddock, today announced plans that would invigorate Australian citizenship, including an Australian Citizenship Day and a nation-wide citizenship promotion campaign.

Mr Ruddock was speaking in Melbourne at the launch of the Government's response to the report of the Australian Citizenship Council.

"The Government agrees with the Council's conclusion that in just over 50 years of its existence, Australian citizenship has been a major success story," Mr Ruddock said. "However, we can do even more with our ideas of citizenship."

Mr Ruddock said a key initiative to enhance citizenship was a nation-wide campaign due to start mid year. "The campaign will promote take-up of Australian citizenship by eligible permanent residents and will build on a wider community understanding of the role of citizenship in our society.

"Among other initiatives, the Government will establish an Australian Citizenship Day, to be held annually on 17 September, commencing this year," Mr Ruddock said.

"We will also continue to encourage and provide opportunities for people who are already Australian citizens to publicly affirm their loyalty and commitment to Australia, using a modified form of the Pledge taken by new citizens at ceremonies."

While the Minister noted that there are to be no changes to the basic criteria for grant of Australian citizenship, the Government will pursue a number of legislative refinements in some areas. This will include tightening the 'good character' provisions and extending existing provisions to benefit children and young adults.

An example of this is an amendment to the Australian Citizenship Act to allow children to have a Citizenship Certificate in their own right, rather than be included on their parent's certificate.

On the question of loss of Australian citizenship by Australians who acquire another citizenship, Mr Ruddock said "the Government is disposed to support repeal of the relevant section of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 so that people no longer lose citizenship in these circumstances.

"However, given the significance of this change to long standing citizenship law and practice, it is important that the community has a further opportunity to express its opinions.

"Accordingly, the Government intends to issue a discussion paper inviting community opinions on this issue before making a final decision," Mr Ruddock said.

"Australian citizenship is an important common bond for all Australians, whether Australians by birth or by choice. "The Government believes these initiatives announced today will enhance the meaning and value of Australian citizenship, and will be relevant to every Australian," Mr Ruddock said.

Editors note: Australian Citizenship... A Common Bond is available on the Internet address:

<http://www.immi.gov.au>

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