



## **AUSTRALIA DAY 2009 SPEECH - GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP**

Taking out Australian citizenship is a great thing. Australia is indeed a wonderful country. Not only will you not regret taking out Australian citizenship, you will come to regard it as one of the most sensible decisions you ever made.

Others have spoken to you about the opportunities and obligations that come with Australian citizenship, and I strongly endorse their remarks. But I want to urge you not to only regard yourselves as Australian citizens, but as global citizens also. Marshall McLuhan said famously, years ago, that we all live in a global village.

Everything has gone global. Our problems are now global – global warming, global terrorism, global overpopulation, global financial crisis, global hunger, and global diseases.

And so our solutions, and our responses, must be global also. Just a few days ago we witnessed one of the greatest moments of our lifetimes – the swearing in of an American President of African background. Many of you will be aware of the history of oppression of Black Americans by White Americans, the racial hatred and the bigotry. So to see this moment, when the American people said, we are ready to have a black man lead us, is a mighty thing. It is impossible to overestimate its significance.

I have written a letter to Barack Obama congratulating him on his election. I don't expect he'll get to read it, but I expect someone will, and I regard the letter as part of my obligations as a global citizen and as the representative of the people of Wills.

In that letter I have urged President Obama to turn his attention to two things. The first is the situation in the Middle East. I know it is far from the only cause of religious fundamentalist terrorism, but the absence of peace in the Middle East is in my view one cause of global terrorism. We should be trying harder to achieve peace.

Of course there are no easy answers there, and I do not pretend to have the answers.

But I do know that in other trouble spots around the world the international community gets involved. The international community sends troops to keep the peace and maintain law and order. It happens in Afghanistan, in Somalia, in Timor. It happened in the former Yugoslavia. I do not see why the United Nations cannot resolve to send troops into Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and anywhere else in the region where fighting is taking place. Those troops would have a mission to stop the bloodshed and punish anyone who wanted to continue it.

Secondly, I have urged President Obama to turn his attention to climate change, to global warming. The United States is the largest emitter of Carbon Dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Regrettably under President Bush it set no targets to cut carbon emissions and constantly frustrated and undermined attempts by others to take international action to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

President Obama can show real global leadership, and change the course of world history, away from one of more droughts, more bushfires, more floods and more storms, by taking strong action both in the United States and at the world climate change talks at the end of this year in Copenhagen to stabilise the amount of carbon in the atmosphere as soon as possible. Reputable scientific opinion is that it would be dangerous to allow the amount of carbon in the atmosphere to exceed 450 parts per million. Barack Obama has a once in a lifetime opportunity to lead the world away from that precipice.

There are responsibilities we have as Australian citizens. There are also responsibilities we have as global citizens. Many of you, who have come here from lands far away, will appreciate this more than most.

My fellow citizens, I wish you success in everything you do in the future. I hope we can combine our brains, our muscles, and our idealism, to build the great nation of Australia in prosperity, peace, and freedom.

**KELVIN THOMSON MP**

**Member for Wills**

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