



## **AUSTRALIA DAY CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2010**

I congratulate every one of you here today on your decision to take out Australian Citizenship, and I salute your courage, in building a new life in a new land. As someone who lives only a short walk from where I grew up in Pascoe Vale, I have often wondered about both the things that have caused so many Australians, so many of you, to come so far and make completely new lives here. I have also wondered about the magnitude of the changes and the adjustments you have had to make to build a new life in a very different country.

And Australia is a very different country. It looks different and it is. At first sight it appears to be vast, open and empty, quite unlike the overcrowded cities and countries of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. No doubt for some of you, maybe many of you, that is part of Australia's attraction.

But appearances can be deceiving. Over 90% of the Australian landmass is arid and capable of supporting only a small population.

The CSIRO found back in 1996 that we might struggle to support a population of over 20 million unless we were prepared to change our ways.

Our population has since risen to 23 million, and is projected to rise to 35 million by 2050. This is impacting on our water supplies – we are now on permanent water restrictions in Melbourne – and it is impacting on the prices of essentials; the cost of water is going up, the cost of food is going up, the cost of petrol is going up, the cost of land and housing is going up. Rising population equals higher prices.

It is also impacting on our native wildlife. Over 200 of Australia's 760 bird species are under threat. Birds and animals which were commonplace when I was a boy – Koalas, Platypus, Emus, Lyrebirds, Kookaburras – have all dramatically declined in the past couple of decades.

I believe that we are incredibly lucky to live in Australia. I believe Australia is quite simply the best country in the world in which to live.

And I believe that we have obligations, as Australian citizens, to this country. To look after it. To pass on to our children, and our grandchildren, a country, and an Australian way of life, in as good a condition as the one our parents and grandparents gave to us.

I have put forward a plan to protect Australia's environment by stabilising Australia's population at 26 million by 2050.

Now a number of people have said, this is fair enough, but our impact depends not only on how many of us there are, but also on our lifestyles – how much electricity, petrol, water etc., we use. This is fair comment. Many Australians live in an extravagant and wasteful way.

Some eat too much junk food, too much fat and sugar. This leads to obesity and health problems such as diabetes. It is a driving factor behind our escalating health care costs. Some drink too much alcohol. We see this reflected in our road toll and alcohol-fuelled violence in our cities. Other Australians seem to be unable to say no to their children, and prefer to rack up debt on their credit cards, rather than wait till they can actually pay for the latest and newest thing to arrive in the stores. Our credit card debts are at record levels.

We are living beyond our means, and our environment, our health, and our personal finances, are paying, and will pay, a heavy price for this.

In my view, being a good Australian citizen means respecting this ancient and fragile land, its original Aboriginal inhabitants, and its unique and beautiful birds, plants and animals. It means living in a way which will safeguard and secure this wonderful country for those who we hold it on trust for. I congratulate you again on the important decision you have taken, and wish you well in everything that you do in the future. I look forward to working with you to build the great nation of Australia in prosperity, peace and freedom

**KELVIN THOMSON MP**

**Member for Wills**