

**The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Of Australian Citizenship Conference**  
**University of Melbourne**  
**( 21-23 July 1999 )**

***Group Discussion:***  
***“ Australian Identity and Citizenship “***

1 . *Did the emergence of the Australian Citizenship in 1949 help define the Australian national identity ? Does it now ?*

Australian national identity is evolutionary , going through events and opportunities, perceived differently by people living in different parts of Australia in accordance with their own life experience ( and to some extent , their gender ) and influenced by people-to-people interaction either within Australia ( eg new waves of migrants ) or overseas ( travel and / or globalized cultural and commercial contacts )

The emergence of Australian citizenship in 1949 helped define that national identity but only by a limited extent because of the White Australia Policy. Its impact has been more pronounced because of the maturity of Australia as a nation, since the abolition of the White Australia Policy .

( NB . The Group did not attempt to define the Australian national identity. )

2. *Australian Citizenship and the Republic issue .*

The Group considered the republic question and debate have contributed to the consideration of Australian citizenship. Other practice such as the new millennium and the Celebration of the Centenary of our Federation needs to also be considered. The wide-spread debate about the republic - including the People's Constitutional Convention in early 1999 , have raised questions about what is an Australian citizen. For many, the Republic is the means whereby Australians can commonly identify with an Australian citizen as Head of State. It is apparent that changes in the composition of the Australian population influence a move towards a republic and therefore consequential impact on the question of citizenship.

3. *What steps to be taken to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Australian Citizenship ?*

There are short and long term steps. At this point in time, it seems a bit late for the short term ones.

Short term :

Such as better promotion and exposure for this Conference itself and commemorative stamps to mark the event.

Long term :

- . Australian-born citizens' opportunity to have citizenship pledge ( an important symbolic gesture )
- . Widest possible awareness of citizenship education ( at the primary and secondary levels ) across Australia as part of the school curriculum.
- . Further grass-root co-operation between the Local Governments and communities in the promotion of citizenship ceremony and citizenship awareness.
- . Also at the Commonwealth/State level, research to be conducted to ascertain the reasons why certain national groups ( ethnic groups ) do not apply for Australian citizenship.

( Day Two of the Conference - 22 July 1999 ).

Moderator : Quang Luu , Head of SBS Radio