



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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Hansard 4 August 1998

### IMMIGRATION

**Mr D'ARCY** (Woodridge—ALP) (12 p.m.): Today's announcement of a change in the direction of immigration policy by the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Kim Beazley, is a welcome change and a breath of fresh air. I am a long-term advocate of immigration into Australia and Mr Beazley's announcement brings some sanity back into the debate. It is unfortunate that for the past two decades there has been a dearth in the development of immigration policy by all political parties, including my own. It is pleasing to see Mr Beazley lead the charge for Australia's future. We saw the headline today which read "Beazley brings back immigration for the future". Today's Courier-Mail editorial subheading reads "Time for a debate about tolerance" and states—

"It is a breath of fresh air in what had become a stale corner of public policy."

Mr Beazley's remarks were taken from a speech which he made at the Global Population Seminar. It was a courageous stance taken by Mr Beazley. I believe that there has been a latent group within the Australian intelligentsia which has always realised that it is absolutely necessary that we have long-term immigration policies. I believe that this is one of those areas which, perhaps, could be taken out of the party political scene and be made a cross-party issue.

Immigration is a big issue for Australia. To have it on the backburner or, as the Courier-Mail described it, in a stale corner for two decades is a sad indictment on this country. The member for Broadwater has just been speaking about the depopulation of Australia's regions. We have had the situation of Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania competing for internal immigration and skiting that one State is growing faster than another. The real figures indicate the compounding effect of putting people into a particular area.

Take, for example, a small country town with a population of 100 people. If that town loses 10 people that can have a great bearing on the town's survival. The town may have 25 children and if a couple of children leave the school it is possible that the school will close. Other town facilities and services may also close. This has been happening all over Queensland for the past two decades. Towns such as Yaraka and Yalleroi have disappeared from the face of the earth and are simply a dot on the map these days. They have no railway stations, no pubs and no schools.

Immigration is an essential part of the lifeblood of this country. We have been living with a very narrow immigration policy in this country. There has been a view that immigration is the sole cause of unemployment. It is believed that immigrants take jobs from Australians. Those beliefs are so far from the truth that they reek of Lewis Carroll's "curiouser and curiouser" in Alice in Wonderland.

Australia's glory days in regard to immigration occurred in the goldrush days. Because of its rapidity it brought with it a lot of social problems but it was a means of populating Australia. It gave us a base in population numbers. In a moment I will give honourable members a comparison of what happened in terms of immigration between Australia and the United State of America. Of course, people say, "Oh, the United States is a lot bigger." However, the only major difference is the United States' geographical position in relation to Europe. Certainly there is not a lot of difference in size between the two countries.

In the post-war period we had a positive policy towards immigration and this policy virtually made Australia. A lot of our problems were addressed. Because of developments such as the Snowy

Mountains Scheme we found that towns popped up in rural and regional Australia. In Queensland we were able to get regional industries going. The new industries were mostly primary industries, but they were based on migration. We had Italians going to north Queensland, including the Atherton Tableland. We are very proud that Queensland is still the most regionalised State in the country.

If we continue to ignore immigration as a major plank in our political history we will risk our total future and our total security. I believe most honourable members would be surprised by the figures revealed by a comparison between Australia and the United States. In the year 1800 there were 5,000 people in Australia. In the year 1700 there were 1 million people in the United States and in 1800 there were 6 million. By the year 1900 there were 3.7 million people in Australia and 76 million people in the United States. The immigrants to both countries came from the same base. In 1950 there were 7.7 million people in Australia and 150 million in the United States. In 1998 there are roughly 18 million people in Australia and approximately 260 million people in the United States. If honourable members have been to the United States they will be aware that living conditions in some places are not as good as those in Australia. The fact of life is that our 18 million people, living where they do geographically, enjoy a higher standard of living. It is hard to convince many Australians of that fact.

The United States has failed miserably in the area of immigration management. Despite the political agenda of the party in power at a particular time in the United States, there was always a 10% immigration policy. That policy is reflected in the figures I have just cited. A lot of that was done under the cuff. People said, "Mexicans are coming across the border." Mexicans were allowed across the border for the simple reason that the United States was looking at a long-term policy—the North American Free Trade Policy. This was an admirable policy. The Americans virtually said, "We cannot do it for the whole world but, as far as the North American continent is concerned, we are going to raise the standard of living over the next two, three, four or five decades." The Americans have achieved this in conjunction with Mexico and Canada.

We do not have such a problem, but we do assume some responsibility for New Zealand and some of our Pacific neighbours. We have not been able to streamline a sane, sensible immigration policy in this country which would supply jobs. Far from taking jobs, immigration supplies jobs. Immigrants, if they are properly melded into Australian society, compound the employment situation. They bring tourism to this country. They have to go to school. They buy houses. As a result, jobs are created.

**Mr Gibbs:** They also make excellent chefs.

**Mr D'ARCY:** That is true. We have adopted a lot of their cultures. That is part of our multicultural policy. The Leader of the Federal Opposition has shown courage in the face of much negativity in relation to immigration. Perhaps one day we may even have some sane coastal management policies in this State where we are not destroying our wetlands. We may even have a rapid transport road to the Gold Coast which is up to European standards.

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