




Speech By
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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Immigration

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (3.01 pm): My great-grandfather came to this country escaping from war and famine. On an old document he marked the part reserved for his signature with a shaky 'X', indicating that he was not numerate or literate in Irish, let alone English. That is the genius of this country: he could come here with nothing and in the space of a generation transform himself and my family. This is the Australian story of migration. Now, as then, some seek to scapegoat new migrants. Last week we heard the LNP immigration minister say of potential immigrants similar to my great-grandfather—

... they won't be numerate or literate in the own language, let alone English ... These people would be taking Australian jobs ... for many of them that would be unemployed, they would languish in unemployment queues and on Medicare and the rest of it ...

There is a complete lack of logic that new migrants would be both taking Australian jobs and languishing on unemployment queues. This is plainly a nonsense devised with malicious intent. Mr Dutton sought to marginalise and scapegoat migrants.

Ironically, the very next day I attended the Logan Migrant Small Business Expo. There, many migrants, especially refugees, were learning about employment law, tax and entrepreneurialism. They were keen in this country to make something better. That is the strength of Australia. The fact that our immigration minister either does not understand the Australian migration experience or wilfully misleads Australian voters for political gain at the expense of those who are refugees is truly sad. Australia deserves representatives who have higher standards. The fact that Mr Turnbull described Mr Dutton as 'outstanding' just shows that Mr Turnbull has not changed the LNP; indeed, the LNP has changed him.

A few weeks ago I went to the airport to meet refugees invited to Australia with Access, an Australian government settlement services provider. There were two families from Cameroon and escapees from Islamic totalitarianism in Syria and Iraq. These families were positive and hopeful and especially grateful for their new chance at life in Australia. One was a doctor and another a psychologist. They were all keen to learn English and get to work. One young man was going into year 10 at Marsden State High School. I asked him what he wanted to become in two years. In good English he said to me that he wanted to become an astronomer. I do not know whether he will become an astronomer, but we should never forget that even if you grow up in a refugee camp you can still dream of the stars—some to dream on the society we have built here under the Southern Cross.