



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Citizenship

SPEECH

Wednesday, 22 October 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker	Andrews, Karen, MP	Question No.	

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (09:32): It was my great privilege on the weekend before last to welcome 51 new Australians in my electorate of McPherson on behalf of our nation. I hosted a morning tea and a citizenship ceremony at one of our local schools, Merrimac State School, and it was, as these occasions always are, inspiring to see the enthusiasm and the pride of these new Australians as they shared this very special day with their friends and families. These 51 new Australians, from children through to seniors, came from 19 different nations including the United Kingdom, Canada, Portugal and India. They each took the citizenship pledge after having passed the citizenship test that is part of the process. It is interesting to note that the latest summary of citizenship testing shows that, last year, 98.3 per cent of those undertaking the citizenship test passed it, and the number of people taking up citizenship is increasing with more than 123,000 taking the pledge in 2012-13.

One of the nicest aspects of citizenship ceremonies is the opportunity for all of those who are present, whether they are already citizens, or even if they are not, to participate in the affirmation. It gives family and friends the chance to express their civic pride and their commitment to Australia. It is always entered into with great enjoyment and with a sense of pride and passion. It is a reminder that citizenship confers both rights and responsibilities, and that we all play a role in shaping our nation and creating the types of communities that we want for the future.

As I said at the outset, I find citizenship ceremonies incredibly inspiring. They are a reminder that Australia is, and always has been, a welcoming nation. We welcome over 190,000 new permanent residents every year to share our values and our way of life. I do believe that, now we have regained control of our borders and stopped the flood of illegal arrivals that occurred under the previous government, the Australian people can have even greater confidence in and support for our orderly immigration program—and that is a very positive thing.

On the Gold Coast, we, of course, welcome visitors on a daily basis as tourism is the lifeblood of our city, but we also benefit from fantastic local communities made up of people from many nations. According to the 2011 census, around 30 per cent of McPherson residents were born overseas. I want to take this opportunity in the national parliament to welcome the 51 newest citizens to call the southern Gold Coast home. It was a delight to meet them and an honour to be able to officiate at their very special occasion. I thank them once again for their commitment and wish them a very happy, healthy and prosperous future in our great nation.