

*Re-imagining Australian citizenship:  
Australian values and allegiance to Australia*

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**Abstract:** This paper explores how Australian values have been incorporated in the recently enacted Allegiance to Australia Act. It focuses on the discursive shifts that have refigured the concept of Australian values as a way of defining disloyalty and treason among particular migrants who threaten the Australian way of life. Originally popularised by the Howard government as a way to define Australian identity and replace multiculturalism, Australian values are today presented in legislation as a mechanism that can combat youth radicalisation and counter terrorist activities. Through a genealogy of how the debate around Australian values has evolved over the past decade, this paper suggests that such notions are not fixed. An exploration of the transformation of Australian values culminating in their inclusion in allegiance legislation allows us to become conscious of the myths that surround the notion of a unique national Australian identity. It highlights the need to ‘denaturalise’ these values so that they can be reimagined in other ways which are inclusive of all citizens.

**Keywords:** Australian values; allegiance; Australian citizenship.

### **New act, old values**

On the last day of parliamentary sitting in December 2015, Malcolm Turnbull’s centre-right government passed the *Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) 2015* Bill. This act focuses on the revocation of Australian citizenship for dual nationals who are involved in terrorism offences. Today dual nationals who

become members of terrorist organisations and engage in terrorist activities are deemed to have “severed their bond and repudiated their allegiance to Australia” and as a consequence, can be stripped of their Australian citizenship (Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Act 2015 (Cth) s. 4 (Austl.)).

The Allegiance to Australia Act was introduced by the government as a response to public concerns about the radicalisation of Muslim youth and terrorist-related activities on Australian soil, and was guided by a desire to protect national borders. Since the attacks of September 11, Australia, along with other liberal democratic nations have obsessed over national security, fearing that many migrants from non-Western nations are threatening the freedoms, institutions and values of the Western world. This prevalent discourse has led to the introduction of a range of disciplinary mechanisms and technologies of government that include citizenship tests, immigration contracts, national values statements, mandatory detention of asylum seekers, and now with the outcome of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, stricter and more punitive citizenship practices are envisaged.

In Australia, the declared objective of these new technologies of government is to regulate the conduct of migrants so that they can integrate into a prescribed way of life and become model citizens. Related to this process of “securitising citizenship” (Hindess, 2004) is the government’s desire to simultaneously reassure those Australian-born citizens of European and Judeo-Christian heritage who are considered to be the ‘mainstream’ that their way of life will prevail. Since 2007, reassurance has come in the form of officially defining this Australian way of life by a set of core civic values that have their origins in European Enlightenment and which are simply referred to as “Australian values” (Chisari, 2009).

While many believe that the debate over Australian values is a recent phenomenon born out of the fear that these values are being threatened by migrant differences (Bhandar, 2010), this has not always been the case. In the 1980s during the early days of neoliberal governing, the notion of “shared fundamental values” was promoted as integral to the policy of multiculturalism (Fraser, 1981). This association between values and multiculturalism was further accentuated during the lead up to the centenary of Federation celebrations, when the Australian Citizenship Council (2000) proposed the Australian Compact, an official civic statement that was purported to celebrate cultural diversity and ensure social cohesion. The Australian Citizenship Council (2000, p. 6) defined the meaning of citizenship as encompassing “ideals of civic life that can be seen as the public core values in a society whose people follow many different beliefs and ways of life, are of many different national and ethnic origins.” It acknowledged that these civic values had been informed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions and recommended that the principles of the Australian Compact should support social cohesion and define Australian multiculturalism. The Council wrote:

To speak of social cohesion is not to say ‘you must all become like us,’ ‘us’ being an imagined ‘typical Australian’ who does not exist. It is to say that what we have in common, what holds us together, are the core civic values which, as Australian multiculturalism implies, include strong acceptance and respect for cultural diversity. (2000, p. 19)

The Australian Compact was never put into practice and soon after the events of September 11, the notion of Australian values took on a more sinister function.

This paper explores how the notion of Australian values has recently evolved in political and public discourse to become implicated as a mechanism of national security. Through a genealogical approach, the analysis reveals that Australian values are not fixed notions that represent Australia's 'true' national identity. Genealogy allows us to investigate how the allegiance legislation works as part of a "historical specificity" and in doing so reveals that "who and what we are is not fixed or eternal, not a matter of destiny or grand design, but a series of contingent becomings" (Walters, 2012, p. 115). In this way, the recent iterations of Australian values in public discourse can be understood as part of technologies of the self that instruct migrants on how to conduct themselves as 'model' citizens while at the same time work as a form of reassurance for the broader Australian community. Reassurance is desired in this neoliberal way of governing as it aims to give confidence, peace and a sense of security to a population (Chisari, 2012) while at the same time, it affirms the government's role as "providers of protection and security" (Bigo, 2002, p. 65). Such practices need to be reimagined so that we can come to understand that in a globalised world, 'Australian values' are essentially basic political rights that are desired by all kinds of residents living in a neoliberal society. In this way, native-born citizens, new citizens, migrants and refugees can achieve a sense of belonging and inclusion as members of the Australian community.

## **The remaking of Australian values**

Under the new Allegiance to Australia Act, the citizenship bond between the individual and the nation is considered to be "severed" if dual nationals behave in a manner that is incompatible with the shared values of the Australian community. The new act states:

Parliament recognises that Australian citizenship is a common bond, involving reciprocal rights and obligations, and that citizens may, through certain conduct incompatible with the shared values of the Australian community, demonstrate that they have severed that bond and repudiated their allegiance to Australia. (Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Act 2015 (Cth) s. 4 (Austl.))

Throughout the act, there are many definitions of the ways in which the bond between the individual can be severed from the national body. Yet the inclusion of Australian values as part of incompatible conduct is unprecedented as it represents a new and radical context for the use of Australian values. Traditionally, Australian values have been evoked by both sides of government as a way of defining what is considered to be Australia's 'unique' identity. They include the notion of mateship and a fair go, freedom of speech and respect for equality among different groups. They have also encompassed democracy and the rule of law (Austin and Fozdar, 2016). More recently, the concept of Australian values has been offered as the solution to the problems associated with the policy of multiculturalism (Howard, 2006). Yet, despite the government's protestation that these values are uniquely Australian, it is clear that these principles share much

with what is generally referred to as the basic human rights shared by a common humanity.

The language of values, however, is more affective than the language of rights. Values allude to the personal attributes of individuals as they are equated with notions of morality and ethics (Mitchell, 2005). The etymology of the word touches on notions of “justice, morality, virtue, pleasure, utility and happiness” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 365). The inclusion of the language of values in legislation can therefore be understood as “an attempt to regulate and instil in the population a system of ‘ethical behaviour’ that is predicated on the notion that living by a set of core values will secure the happiness and moral wellbeing of the national body” (Chisari, 2015, pp. 576-577). It is also ethical because migrants come to regulate their own behaviour as free individuals who want to achieve a sense of belonging in their newly adopted nation.

It should be noted that native-born Australian citizens, as has become common in matters of civic duties, are exempt in this legislation from having to demonstrate their loyalty to Australia for it is only the dual national that is targeted as the ‘deviant’ who has divided loyalties and threatens what is commonly praised as the Australian way of life. In singling out dual nationals, the government claimed to have acted according to international obligations which stipulate that individuals cannot be made stateless if their Australian citizenship were to be revoked. Yet the outcome of such a decision is that it is the migrant as ‘other’ who needs to be disciplined into the correct way of being a model Australian citizen while ‘native’ Australian nationals form part of the social norm, that is, ‘the mainstream’ who will not need to prove their allegiance as it is presumed that they naturally embody the set of core civic principles known as Australian values.

## **Redefining allegiance**

Under the new legislation, the concept of allegiance has replaced the traditional expectation that new citizens make a commitment to the nation. The use of allegiance is interesting as it implies a stronger and more complex legal bond than a commitment between the new citizen and the nation, leading to an obligation, that is, “a duty of obedience in exchange for protection” (Jenkins, Nolan and Rubenstein, 2014, p. 9). In this way, the enactment of the allegiance legislation demonstrates how Foucault’s notion of disciplinary power continues to be relevant in modern neoliberal societies as dual nationals are subjected to continual surveillance of what is deemed to be correct conduct in order to be permitted to maintain their Australian citizenship status. The new legislation also alludes to what Perera has described as the “privatization of citizenship” (2007, p. 7) whereby neoliberal governing reconfigures the conferral of citizenship as a contract between the citizen and the nation, what many politicians have described as a mutual obligation.

The requirement that new citizens demonstrate their allegiance to Australia is not a new concept. Traditionally it has been expressed through the saying of the pledge of commitment at the official and mandatory citizenship ceremony. It is a form of disciplinary power that works on the individual bodies of new citizens as they are

instructed to stand and perform the pledge. In this way, the saying of the pledge normalises Australian values as the 'true' values of 'real' Australians. The new citizens promise to be loyal to "Australia and its people" by "respecting," "upholding" and "obeying" the democratic beliefs, rights, liberties and laws of the nation. They promise to regulate their conduct and embrace the values and laws of the 'mainstream' Australian people and through this compliance are rewarded with the conferral of Australian citizenship.

The citizenship oath was first implemented with the enactment of the Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1948 when all aspiring citizens were required to swear to "bear true allegiance to" the King (Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2002, p. 2). In those formative days of citizenship law, allegiance was sworn to the monarch in the name of God rather than swearing allegiance to Australia and its people as is the practice today, which reflected older influences of juridical and pastoral relations of power at play in the process of joining a national community.

In 1966, the oath was amended to include words of renunciation to all other allegiances in order to "control" the loyalty that new citizens expressed to Australia (Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2002). This change can be understood through Foucault's (1988) writings on technologies of the self in which the notion of renunciation is raised as part of ancient Christian practice and as part of caring for the self and knowing the self. According to the Greeks, "to be concerned with oneself was ... one of the main principles of cities, one of the main rules for social and personal conduct" (Foucault, 1988, p. 19). Foucault elaborates that by "teaching people to occupy themselves with themselves, he [Socrates] teaches them to occupy themselves with the city" (1988, p. 20). Hence, in the modern world, "knowledge of oneself constitutes the fundamental principle" (Foucault, 1988, p. 22) so that to renounce one's 'native' citizenship status during the saying of the citizenship pledge serves to transform the migrant "from one reality to another" resulting in the transformation of the self (Foucault, 1988, p. 40). In this way, the saying of the Australian citizenship pledge is similar to Christian practices in antiquity, that is, a confessional religion that imposed on its followers the duty of truth obligations which today are represented as the embracement of Australian values.

The obligation of renunciation was removed from Australian law in 1986 as it was deemed to be "ambiguous and unnecessary" (Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2002, p. 2). Further changes were made in 1993 when the oath of allegiance was replaced with the Pledge of Commitment. At that time, Immigration Minister Nick Bolkus explained that new citizens needed a new oath which reflected "the core values of Australia and which is a bonding instrument" (cited in Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2002, p. 2). That pledge of commitment still remains in place today and it is still promoted as being symbolic of the embracement of Australian values.

The new Allegiance to Australia Act refers to 'renunciation by conduct' and defines the criminalised terrorist offences of certain dual nationals as those who have repudiated their allegiance. To renounce means to abandon one's obligation while to repudiate it is to reject and deny the 'truth' and value of Australian citizenship. In this way, this can be understood that to repudiate one's loyalty is to reject Australian values. Hence, it is now unlawful for dual nationals to engage in or advocate doing a terrorist act as well as to be

part of a terrorist organisation that does not respect Australian values. This is the dual citizen who, according to the act,

is opposed to Australia's interests, values, democratic beliefs, rights or liberties, so that if a person were to fight for or be in the service of such an organisation the person would be acting inconsistently with their allegiance to Australia. (Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Act 2015 (Cth) s. 35AA (2) (B) (Austl.))

What is astonishing about this new piece of legislation is that the rejection of Australian values forms the basis for defining a betrayal of allegiance.

## **Howard's manifesto**

The idea of revoking the Australian citizenship of citizens who engage in conduct that is deemed unbecoming of Australian values is not a new concept. In 2005, immediately after the London terrorist bombings, the then Prime Minister John Howard stated that he supported the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair's proposal of introducing deportation laws for terrorists. Howard believed that if migrants had "failed to properly embrace the values of this society" then government should consider taking away their citizenship because they had broken their part of the mutual obligation deal (Cassidy, 2005, p. 2). Furthermore, Howard believed that all migrants who came to Australia had "the responsibility to endorse and imbibe and embrace the values of our society" (Cassidy, 2005, p. 2). Howard defined these values as "free speech, but it also includes a respect for religious difference and it includes a total repudiation and rejection of violence or the preaching of violence or the endorsement of violence as a solution to political disputes" (Cassidy, 2005, p. 2). He further elaborated that his comments represented "a fair balance" between the demand for migrant integration and the granting of citizenship and that "most Australians would see it in those terms" (Cassidy, 2005, p. 2). Hence, Howard believed that newcomers had to regulate their own behaviour in order to reassure the Australian people that they would not threaten Australia's peaceful society.

According to McKenna, comments such as these became common during Howard's term as Prime Minister as he "initiated a reliance on the rhetoric of Australian values" that emerged as a "moral language" through which to define a singular national "ethos" (2008, p. 593) while at the same time denouncing the values of others (Bhandar, 2010). In this way, learning about Australian values was presented as a civilising force that would bring improvement and progress to migrants (Hindess, 2004). This language became Howard's own political manifesto as it provided the rationale for policy decisions in immigration, citizenship, national identity, education and history (McKenna, 2008). However, the stripping of citizenship for individuals who engaged in terrorist activities did not eventuate under the Howard government. It would not be until the election of the next Coalition government in 2013 when public debates about Australian values and allegiance would resurface.

## **Team Australia's values**

In September 2013 during his swearing-in speech as Prime Minister, Tony Abbott declared that his government would govern for “all Australians” and that “we will be a problem-solving government based on values, not ideology” (cited in Griffiths, 2013). Like Howard before him, Abbott promoted Australian values as the very DNA of Australian identity. Yet while Prime Minister, Abbott went further than Howard in championing ‘our’ Western values in the name of national security. At the same time he attempted to make Australian values more ‘mainstream’ and less contested than earlier by shifting the rhetoric to “Team Australia.”

Team Australia was Abbott's new catchphrase, a term he drew upon in order to appeal to “all Australians” (Cox, 2014). In this way, Abbott was hoping to appeal to the nation's self-proclaimed ideals of fairness and egalitarianism as the term alludes to Australia's illustrious sporting culture. Team Australia, according to this logic, ‘naturally’ embodied the principles of Australian values. In August 2014 during a press conference announcing new counter-terror laws to combat “home-grown terrorism,” Abbott declared that “everyone has got to be on Team Australia ... to put this country, its interests, its values and its people first” (cited in Cox, 2014). In this way, he hoped to provide protection to the Australian community.

In February 2015 at the launch of the *National Security Statement* that followed Sydney's Martin Place siege, Abbott (2015) declared that his government's greatest responsibility was to “keep Australians safe,” drawing on older notions of the art of government as part of pastoral care. To do so, he evoked the notion of Australian values as the mechanisms that not only were to instruct migrants on how to conduct themselves as model citizens, but also as part of counter-terror activities, stating that “no one should live in our country while denying our values and rejecting the very idea of a free and open society” (Abbott, 2015). Yet, as McKenna aptly explains, “security is not a value” (2008, p. 596). It is merely used to obscure political truths such as Australia's controversial participation in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as an attempt to present them as a “moral struggle” (McKenna, 2008, p. 596). Theorised in a more productive way, the imposition of Australian values in citizenship legislation can also be understood as part of the techniques of pastoral and disciplinary power that have as their main objective the ‘moulding’ of individuals, both ‘native’ and ‘naturalised’ citizens, into free and self-regulating individuals (Hindess, 1996) who may comply with or resist such techniques.

A few months later, Abbott called for a public debate about what it means to be an Australian. He appointed former Immigration Minister and elder Liberal statesman, Phillip Ruddock, to act as expert and ‘truth-teller’ and lead the discussion paper *Australian Citizenship: Your Right, Your Responsibility* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014), and asked ordinary citizens to provide suggestions on ways to develop greater appreciation of Australian citizenship and its privileges and obligations. These processes of consensus and consultation are important in neoliberal governing as they reassure native-born Australians that they are participating in the decision-making

process. With this new discussion paper, Australian values were once again put in the spotlight, ready to be employed as a counter-terror mechanism that would protect the Australian way of life. The government also proposed strengthening the citizenship test framework by “including questions about allegiance and more questions about the rule of law, values and democratic rights and responsibilities” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014, p. 4). It also proposed “strengthening the Pledge and Preamble to the Citizenship Act to include words about allegiance to Australia and an undertaking not to act contrary to that allegiance” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014, p. 4).

In particular, Abbott (2015) stressed that new citizens had to understand the ‘core’ values that are embedded in the meaning of the Australian citizenship pledge. It should not be forgotten, however, that there already existed a disciplinary mechanism that had the same objective, namely, the Australian citizenship test. The test had been introduced a decade earlier by the Howard government as a way to judge and classify migrants’ suitability to receive the conferral of Australian citizenship through their ability to regulate their conduct and acquire the prescribed knowledge through self-study. As Hindess argues, disciplinary power is “exercised over one or more individuals in order to provide them with particular skills, and attributes, to develop their capacity for self-control” (1996, p. 113) so that they can be transformed into ‘civilised Australian citizens’ who do not threaten the native-born Australians.

It should be remembered that in 2008, the original Australian citizenship test had been revised so that aspiring citizens would come to appreciate and share the core values embedded in the Australian citizenship pledge (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). Abbott’s proposed changes suggest, however, that the test had failed to achieve this outcome. Furthermore, many of those that were being targeted by these proposed reforms were radicalised youth who, as Abbott himself would have understood, had been born with the status of Australian citizenship and therefore would not be required to sit the citizenship test. So, perhaps one way of understanding how the discussion paper worked is to view it as a governmental tool that, although ineffective in achieving what it claimed, its purpose was to symbolically reassure the Australian community that something was being done to combat youth radicalisation.

At the time, the Immigration Minister Peter Dutton described becoming a citizen as entering a contract, which if breached should be revoked. He elaborated:

When people make an oath or an allegiance to our country, it is a very serious undertaking and at the moment there is no consequences for a breach of that contract. And if you like going around as an Australian citizen killing, raping and pillaging people in Syria [and] if your intent is to cause harm back here in Australia, to detonate a bomb or cut off someone's head. If that is your intent you don't deserve to be an Australian citizen.  
(cited in Whyte, 2015)

Dutton’s comments portray dual nationals as deviants who should be punished for not understanding how to conduct themselves in the ‘correct’ manner deemed appropriate in Australian culture. Furthermore, his reference to a contract can be understood as a “reciprocal relationship,” that is, a mutual obligation with the state providing privileges (Elder, 2007) to individuals in return for them performing certain responsibilities and



living in the 'correct' manner. In this context, Australian values become performative because, according to Dutton, as migrants go to work, speak only English at home and send their children to school (Whyte, 2015), they become familiar and knowable (Perera, 2007) and reassuring to "Team Australia" through the elimination of their differences. Dutton, too, declared that "the vast majority of the Australian public support the government's actions to tighten up citizenship" (cited in Whyte, 2015), supporting the view that reassurance of the Australian public was the government's ultimate objective.

## **New Prime Minister—old rhetoric**

When Abbott was ousted by Malcolm Turnbull in September 2015, it was expected that the Allegiance to Australia bill would be abandoned for Turnbull had previously spoken out against it, declaring it to be "unconstitutional" (Turnbull, 2015a). Turnbull had not previously demonstrated any desire to use the rhetoric of Australian values in order to regulate the conduct of the Australian community. Yet soon after taking up the Prime Ministership, he, too, adopted the language of Australian values, particularly after the fatal shooting of Curtis Cheng in Sydney by a fifteen-year-old radicalised youth (Turnbull, 2015b). Immediately after the shooting, Turnbull urged the Australian public not to blame the Australian Muslim community for the murderous actions of one and praised them stating that "it has been heartening to see strong statements of support for Australian values from leading members of the Muslim community" (Turnbull, 2015b). It appears, then, that no Australian leader can ignore these principles that have now become established in the Australian psyche as the weapon to fight violence and differences as well as essential for political survival in contemporary Australian politics.

Turnbull's new found appreciation for Australian values was further accentuated during his first national security speech in November 2015, just two months after taking on the position of the national leader when he declared that his main objective, like Abbott before him, was to keep Australia safe (Turnbull, 2015c). In Turnbull's own words, "the strongest weapons we bring to this battle are ourselves, our values, our way of life" (Turnbull, 2015b). He continued:

This is an important step as we all unite to ensure that we keep Australia safe and ensure that we make it utterly clear to everybody, those who love us and those who seek to harm us too, that we will never walk away from our Australian values. (Turnbull, 2015b)

Like other Prime Ministers before him, Turnbull's main objective was to reassure the people of Australia that his government was committed to 'civilising' the violent behaviour of those people with different values who threatened national security by punishing them with the revocation of their Australian citizenship status.

At the time of the enactment of the allegiance to Australia legislation in December 2015, no major media outlet reported on this radical and controversial change to the rights of citizenship. According to law expert Kim Rubenstein, the Allegiance to Australia bill was "arguably unconstitutional" and lacked clarity in its attempt to define

the repudiation of allegiance through “conduct incompatible with the shared values of the Australian community” (Rubenstein, 2015, p. 1). In particular, she believed that the bill’s attempt to define allegiance was unclear and opened the matter “to abuse on many levels” (Rubenstein, 2015, p. 1) and would have the effect of making dual nationals feel as “vulnerable” second class citizens who are always “suspect” and “insecure” (2015, p. 4). Rubenstein hence concluded that the bill was inconsistent with “the democratic principles of a multicultural country where most members have links to other nation-states” (2015, p. 4). Thus, linking allegiance to national identity and to Australian values has the effect of developing a “moralisation of rights,” that is, a judgement made of the “moral worth of the person” in regards to them being permitted to secure their Australian citizenship rights (Golder and Michaelsen, 2014, p. 288). It illustrates how disciplinary power still informs neoliberal governing as the radicalised citizen is judged to be a ‘deviant’ who needs to be surveilled and disciplined into docility by swearing allegiance to Australia and accepting the normative notions that have been officially defined as Australian values.

### **A ‘return’ to Australian values in the Australian citizenship test?**

By April 2017, the Turnbull government had decided to continue with Abbott’s proposed reform of the Australian citizenship test in order to ensure that migrants swore allegiance to Australia. The Prime Minister announced that allegiance to the nation would be demonstrated through the candidate’s knowledge of and commitment to Australian values (Remeikis, 2017). These changes, Turnbull claimed, would put “Australian values at the heart of citizenship processes and requirements” (cited in Dziedzic and Belot, 2017) and demonstrate that new citizens had integrated into the Australian community, forgetting that this had been the original brief of the Australian citizenship test when the Howard government introduced it a decade earlier.

In June 2017, the government introduced the Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (*Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures*) Bill 2017 and in the ensuing four months, the bill faced heated debates in parliament. Such controversies did not deter the government from arguing that some migrants were lacking respect for what was promoted as ‘uniquely Australian’ values (Dziedzic and Belot, 2017). It provided assurance that the revised test would place greater emphasis on assessing migrants’ attitudes towards religious freedom and “respect for women and children ... questions about child marriage, female genital mutation and domestic violence” and the government concluded that addressing such matters would “empower applicants” (Dziedzic and Belot, 2017).

The aforementioned issues suggest that the government was targeting Muslim migrants and implying that they subscribed to inferior values and were not appreciative of the superiority of Australia’s enlightened Western values and therefore needed to be ‘civilised’ and ‘empowered’ through obligatory learning of these ‘superior’ values. The revised test would hence instruct migrants on how to be rewarded with what Dutton described as “the big prize” of Australian citizenship (cited in Dziedzic and Belot, 2017). This disciplinary technique would also act as a form of reassurance for the Australian community as Turnbull stated that “the vast majority of Australians were

pleased to see politicians ‘standing up for Australian values’” (cited in Dziedzic and Belot, 2017), suggesting that the government would safeguard the Australian way of life from the threats posed by migrant differences.

The citizenship test amendment bill was rejected by the Senate in October 2017 (Zivic, 2017). The Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia Tony Burke declared that the bill’s demise was “a great victory for every person who wants to pledge allegiance to this country and make a commitment to Australia” (cited in Acharya, 2017), suggesting that it was the government’s proposed changes that had prevented aspiring citizens from demonstrating their allegiance and commitment to their adopted nation rather than the Turnbull government’s claim that migrants themselves were hostile towards such notions. Furthermore, Burke declared that the bill was “appalling” and that it harked back to the White Australia Policy as people from China and India, who, being obliged to sit the test as non-native speakers of English, would also need to demonstrate university-level English proficiency while those exempt from sitting the test like Canadians and people from the United Kingdom would not have to demonstrate the same high level of English language proficiency (Hutchens, 2017).

Burke makes a poignant point in connecting the proposed changes to the citizenship test with the old discriminatory practices of the Dictation Test that restricted non-white immigration to Australia for over seventy years. As Offord, Kerruish, Garbutt, Wessell and Pavlovic argue, past practices need to be revisited from different perspectives “in order to recover what has been suppressed and marginalised” (2014, p. 6) so that normative notions such as Australian values can be exposed for their own discriminatory, colonial origins. Similarly, Deputy Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek’s accusation that “the bill was hateful and un-Australian” (Borello, 2017) was notable as it appropriated the language of politicians like Dutton who frequently accused migrants of displaying violent hatred and ‘un-Australian’ behaviour incompatible with Australian values while the Immigration Minister’s own attempts to amend citizenship legislation equated to similar undemocratic and discriminatory practices.

It is interesting to note that some of the strongest criticisms directed at the bill came from politicians like Nick Xenophon, Richard Di Natale and Tanya Plibersek who, reflecting on their own parents’ and grandparents’ difficult migrant experiences (Borello, 2017; Remeikis, 2017), reveal how values are fluid concepts that require constant reimagining in order to ensure a sense of belonging in contemporary Australia. By acknowledging the hardships faced by many migrants and refugees, and learning to engage with and respect their diverse and multiple cultural practices, we as a nation can reflect on “other ways of knowing” (Offord et al., 2014) in order to reimagine Australia as more inclusive. In this way, we can come to an understanding that there are multiple truths and multiple value systems that characterise humanity from all corners of the world.

## **Conclusion: Reimagining an inclusive citizenship**

For over a decade now, Australian values have been ridiculed and censured while at the same time praised and championed, ensuring their survival in public debate and their ongoing connection to Australian identity. The fact that Australian values have become fluid and part of everyday life is testament to their resilience. It is also testament to the support they receive from many migrants who have come to Australia in search of these notions that have been audaciously defined as uniquely Australian values (Chisari, 2015). These values, then, cannot be ignored. Yet this is not to suggest that the Australian community must accept only what is government-sanctioned and adhere to a global dissemination of a neoliberal agenda based on what are claimed to be exclusive values of Western peoples. Nor does it mean that we can ignore the limitations of a value system that was forged from Enlightenment ideals and a brutal colonial past (Offord et al., 2014). Instead, we should identify multiple and inclusive values that are fluid, dynamic and respectful of differences.

By exposing the fluidity of Australian values, we are able to create new spaces and new ways of being Australian. We can reimagine an Australian identity that is inclusive of cultural differences. Such a reimagining will allow us to inform future policy decisions on immigration, citizenship rights and human rights. In this reimagined Australia, the value of freedom would prevent the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. The value of equality would encompass support for marriage equality. The desire to protect the nation would be extended to protecting the environment. In an inclusive Australia, there would be universal support for Indigenous reconciliation and recognition that Indigenous peoples are the original custodians of this great southern land.

A reimagining of Australian citizenship is therefore called for that recognises the multiple value systems experienced by the Australian population. A reimagining of Australian citizenship affirms the government's role as protector of the Australian community while promoting respect for cultural differences. A reimagining of Australian citizenship therefore promotes the production of an inclusive society where fostering belonging becomes the responsibility of all Australian residents whether one is a British migrant, a Muslim refugee, a second-generation Australian politician, an Indigenous activist or an ordinary, Australian-born citizen.

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