

MINISTER WELCOMES NEW CITIZENS TO AUSTRALIA

Minister for Citizenship, Virginia Judge, celebrated Australia Day with 165 new citizens who took their Citizenship pledge at ceremonies in Ashfield, Burwood and Strathfield

Ms Judge urged all new citizens to make their own special contribution and build bridges to the world from the communities they choose to settle in.

“It is fitting that so many people affirmed their commitment to Australia on our national day, when we reflect on what it means to be Australian and celebrate our values of freedom, service and achievement,” she said.

Ms Judge said it was vital that new citizens participate fully in Australian democracy.

“Citizenship entails rights and responsibilities and a sense of belonging whether Australia is the coun-

try of our birth or where we choose to make our home,” she said.

“For our democracy to work effectively, citizens must be well-informed about the way we are governed, their rights and responsibilities.

“As Minister for Citizenship, I will remain vigilant to my commitment to promote equal rights and responsibilities for all residents.”

These include:

- The right to vote.
- The right to apply for any public office or to nominate for election to Parliament.
- The right to apply for an Australian passport and to leave and re-enter the country without a resident return visa.
- The right to seek assistance from Australian

diplomatic representatives while overseas.

- The right to apply to enlist in the Australian Defence Forces and for government jobs.

- The right to register your child as an Australian citizen by descent.

Ms Judge said each new citizen would play a role building the nation into the future.

“They add to the richness of our diverse identity, from the first Australians, whose culture we celebrate as one of the oldest continuing countries in human history, through the generations who have helped shape our national family,” Ms Judge said.

*Minister for Fair Trading Virginia Judge MP
Minister for Citizenship
Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts*



AN AFRICAN CHAMELEON IN GREECE

A very beautiful reptile with vivacious patterns, the African chameleon lives in a very special part of Europe: right on a narrow strip of land formed on Yalova beach in the prefecture of Messenia. A project studying the chameleon and how it can best be protected is underway. The campaign is designed to raise awareness amongst the locals about the rareness of the reptile! and its importance for the preservation of the region's biodiversity.

New \$12 million Bernie Banton Centre opens to fight asbestos related diseases

Premier of NSW Nathan Rees today joined the Acting Governor Professor Marie Bashir and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to open the world's first stand-alone research facility dedicated to improving the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of asbestos related disease.



The Centre is named in honour of Australia's foremost campaigner in the fight to raise awareness about dust diseases Bernie Banton AM.

Mr Rees said up to 20,000 Australians are expected to be affected by asbestos related disease over the next 50 years.

“The new \$12 million Centre will be a world leader in the fight to develop better means of earlier diagnosis and treatment tailored to individual patients,” Mr Rees said.

“The Centre will be operated by the Asbestos Diseases Research

Foundation (ADRF) and is located in the Concord Hospital Research and Education Precinct.

“The research facility will be dedicated to searching for a cure for this terrible disease.

“The new state-of-the-art facility contains eight laboratories as well as education and meeting rooms.”

Mr Rees said naming the new facility the Bernie Banton Centre was a fitting tribute to a remarkable man.

“Bernie was a champion,” Mr Rees said.

“His courage and conviction continue to be an inspiration to us all.

“He was a determined fighter for justice for asbestos victims and their families despite the fact that he was suffering himself with the terrible asbestos-related disease, mesothelioma.

“The Bernie Banton Centre is a fitting monument and token of national gratitude for his personal sacrifice and contributions to the struggle to bring justice to those affected by asbestos-related disease.”

Chair of the Asbestos Diseases Research Foundation and former Premier The Hon Bob Carr said asbestos related diseases were devastating not only for victims but for their families and carers.

“At the moment there is no cure for mesothelioma and the treatment options are very limited,” Mr Carr said. “The new Centre will give hope to sufferers, their families and the community.”

Mr Carr also highlighted the Institute's important focus on education and prevention in the Asia Pacific region.

“I am delighted that after a two year global executive academic search we have been able to attract world-renowned thoracic oncologist Professor Nico van Zandwijk from The Netherlands to lead the new centre,” Mr Carr said.

The NSW Government has committed \$8.5 million to this project, including \$7 million from the Dust Diseases Board to help construct the facility in partnership with The University of Sydney and the ANZAC Research Institute. The ground floor will be occupied by the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI) and the first floor by the ANZAC Research Institute, NSW's fastest-growing medical research institute.

ANZAC Health & Medical Research Foundation Chair, Ms Felicity Barr welcomed the announcement.

“Having the two Institutes together will not only allow the efficient sharing of resources, but also boost the research capacity of NSW and the Concord Hospital research hub in particular,” Ms Barr said.

New program brings diversity into focus

The Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, launched a new program to support communities in their efforts to address cultural, racial and religious intolerance.

Mr Ferguson said the new Diverse Australia Program has an increased focus on addressing issues of intolerance with more funding directed to areas of need. The program will provide funding support to local groups and organisations to tackle issues specific to each community while promoting respect and fairness.

“Last year I asked the department to take a fresh look at the previous Living in Harmony program which had been operating for ten years. I wanted to ensure we were taking the best possible approach to promoting the benefits of cultural diversity” Mr Ferguson said.

Key elements of the new program include:

a small grants scheme of up to \$5000 which will extend the reach of activities and help build the capacity of small organisations to address community needs ongoing year round

funding to increase responsiveness to emerging issues of intolerance when communities identify a need.

“The activities funded are aimed at bringing Australians from all backgrounds together in a positive and productive way,

A key element of the Diverse Australia Program is that it works with different levels of Government and community organisations to empower a local response to issues of racism and intolerance” Mr Ferguson said.

Harmony Day which is celebrated on March 21 remains a key event in the new program.

“In 2009, I would like to see schools, community groups, local governments and business all get behind Harmony Day and make it the best day of celebration ever,” the Parliamentary Secretary added.

The new Diverse Australia Program was launched in Fairfield, Sydney.

*Laurie Ferguson MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs
and Settlement Services*