



Hawkesbury City Council

attachment 2
to
item 292

Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code

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time: 6:30 p.m.



Australian Government

Department of Immigration and Border Protection

Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code



From this time forward, under God^{}
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect, and
whose laws I will uphold and obey.*

*A person may choose whether or not to use the words 'under God'.

Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code



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Chapter 1

Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code

The Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code provides guidance for organisations conducting citizenship ceremonies. It sets out the legal and other requirements for conducting citizenship ceremonies as well as the roles and responsibilities of those conducting ceremonies.

There are three legal requirements which must be followed.

- The presiding officer must be authorised by the Australian Government minister responsible for citizenship matters.
- The presiding officer must read schedule 1 of the Australian Citizenship Regulations 2007 (preamble for citizenship ceremonies) to the candidates. See Appendix 2.
- Most people 16 years of age and over applying for citizenship by conferral must make a pledge of commitment as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia (the pledge). The pledge must be made before the presiding officer.

These requirements are described in more detail in Chapter 9.



First new Australian citizens following the inaugural naturalisation ceremony held at Albert Hall in Canberra on 3 February 1949.



Chapter 2

Australian citizenship

Australian citizenship is an important common bond for all Australians (whether Australians by birth or by choice) and lies at the heart of a unified, cohesive and inclusive Australia.

Citizenship celebrates Australian democracy, equality under the law and respect for each others' beliefs. It is a unique symbol of formal identification with Australia, acknowledging responsibilities and conferring substantive privileges which allow people to participate fully in the community.

Responsibilities:

- Obey the laws and fulfill your duties as an Australian citizen.
- Enrol on the electoral roll and vote at federal, state, territory and local government elections and referenda.
- Serve on a jury, if called on.
- Defend Australia, should the need arise.

Privileges:

- The right to vote and elect Australia's governments.
- The right to apply for appointment to any public office or to nominate for election as a member of parliament (subject to section 44(i) of the Constitution).
- The right to apply for an Australian passport and to leave and re-enter the country without a visa.
- The right to seek assistance from Australian diplomatic representatives while overseas.
- The right to apply to enlist in the defence forces and to apply for government jobs requiring Australian citizenship.
- The right to register a child born to you overseas after you become an Australian citizen, as an Australian citizen by descent.

Chapter 3

Citizenship ceremonies

Citizenship ceremonies fulfil legal requirements prescribed by the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (the Act) and the Australian Citizenship Regulations 2007 (the Regulations). They are conducted under the authority of the Australian Government minister responsible for citizenship matters.

Citizenship ceremonies are generally public ceremonial occasions which provide an important opportunity to formally welcome new citizens as full members of the Australian community. Representatives of all three levels of government (federal, state or territory, and local), community leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, friends and relatives of the candidates are invited to attend.

To reflect the significance of the occasion citizenship ceremonies should be formal and meaningful occasions conducted with dignity, respect and due ceremony. They should be designed to impress upon candidates the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship.

To maintain the dignity and propriety of the occasion, private commercial activities (for example sale of souvenirs) should not be associated with citizenship ceremonies.



Ceremony at the Brisbane Botanical Gardens 1964



Citizenship ceremonies are non-commercial, apolitical, bipartisan and secular. They must not be used as forums for political, partisan or religious expression or for the distribution of material which could be perceived to be of a commercial, political or religious nature.

Religious organisations who wish to provide a holy book to new citizens may supply that book to ceremony organisers to be made available at the venue where the ceremony is being held. Ceremony organisers should provide the information in a way that candidates are clearly able to choose whether or not to take one (for example, provided on a table within the venue). Ceremony organisers should not, however, imply that a holy book is a requirement for the ceremony.

If you need assistance please contact your nearest office of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship or alternatively visit the citizenship website

www.citizenship.gov.au



Chapter 4

Types of ceremonies

Public ceremonies

Candidates should be encouraged to participate in a public citizenship ceremony wherever possible. Local government councils conduct most citizenship ceremonies.

Community organisations may also conduct citizenship ceremonies, usually on or near significant days such as Australia Day, Australian Citizenship Day and significant national anniversaries. Community organisations may be asked to sign an agreement with the department on how ceremonies are to be conducted.



Australian Citizenship Day 2001 ceremony, Hobart Town Hall

Special purpose ceremonies

Special purpose ceremonies may only be arranged when a candidate requires urgent conferral of Australian citizenship or in special circumstances, for example, where a candidate has a disability preventing their attendance at a public ceremony.

To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, presiding officers should not confer Australian citizenship on family members, close friends or acquaintances at special purpose ceremonies.

Invitations to the minister's representative, members of parliament or community groups are not necessary for special purpose ceremonies. However if a member of parliament is invited invitations must be extended to all those required to be invited to public ceremonies. The attendance of family and friends is normally kept to a minimum. The Code applies to special purpose ceremonies in all other respects.



Chapter 5

Where to hold a ceremony

Local councils and organisations who conduct citizenship ceremonies are encouraged to consider the formality and significance of obtaining Australian citizenship when choosing an appropriate venue for a citizenship ceremony.

Citizenship ceremonies may be held out of doors, for example, in a significant public space such as a park or in the same locality as a relevant community event.

As citizenship ceremonies are apolitical and secular, they should not be held in a place of worship or in a venue which has political affiliation. However a community hall adjacent to a place of worship is acceptable.

It is not appropriate for a citizenship ceremony to be held at a venue for the purpose of promoting a commercial enterprise.



Citizenship ceremony at Albert Hall Canberra 2008



Chapter 6

When to hold a ceremony

Scheduling ceremonies

In keeping with government policy that ceremonies be held at regular intervals, local government councils should hold ceremonies at least every two to three months, regardless of the number of candidates available to attend and more frequently if necessary. There is no maximum or minimum number of candidates prescribed for citizenship ceremonies.

Local government councils must provide their local office of the department with a schedule of ceremony dates three to six months in advance. Approximately four weeks prior to a ceremony, the department will provide councils with a list of candidates.

Community organisations must give their local office of the department at least three months notice before the proposed date of the ceremony. This period of time is needed in order to ensure:

- prospective candidates have sufficient time in which to fulfill application requirements
- the department has sufficient time in which to process and approve applications.

Community organisations should also work in partnership with local government councils to ensure a coordinated approach and the availability of the mayor or another delegated council officer to act as presiding officer at the community ceremony. See Chapter 9 for more information on presiding officers.



Parliamentary sitting days

It is important and appropriate that elected representatives have the opportunity to welcome new citizens as formal members of the Australian community. Local Government councils should, therefore, ensure their ceremony schedule allows for ample opportunity for elected representatives from all three tiers of government to attend throughout the year.

In order to maximise the likelihood of acceptance of official invitations from elected representatives of government, wherever possible, citizenship ceremonies should not be scheduled on federal or state or territory parliamentary sitting days.

One exception is Australian Citizenship Day, which is celebrated on 17 September each year. A timetable for federal parliamentary sittings can be obtained from the Australian Parliament House website at www.aph.gov.au/house/info/sittings

Before scheduling citizenship ceremonies organisers should consult with their local federal member of parliament and a senator from a different political party to that of the federal member, to ascertain their availability.

Where a citizenship ceremony is scheduled on the same day as a local government council meeting, the citizenship ceremony should take place prior to the commencement of the meeting and be conducted with due ceremony and importance.

Significant days in the Australian citizenship calendar

There are two significant days for Australian citizenship. These days are:

- Australia Day—26 January
- Australian Citizenship Day—17 September

Special event days are effective in delivering citizenship messages to the community. Local governments and community organisations can play an important role in marking these days for celebration and in raising the awareness and significance of citizenship in the community.



Australia Day—26 January

Australia Day provides an opportunity for all Australians to reflect and celebrate their Australian citizenship as part of a special day of national celebration and pride. Australia Day is marked by special events across Australia including special citizenship and affirmation ceremonies.

Australian Citizenship Day—17 September

Introduced in 2001, Australian Citizenship Day is a day for everyone in the community to reflect on and celebrate the meaning and importance of Australian citizenship and the role Australian citizens have played in shaping our nation. It is a day for all Australians to celebrate the values which underpin Australian citizenship including democracy, equality under the law and respect for each others' beliefs as well as those aspects of our way of life that unite us.

Australian Citizenship Day is celebrated with special citizenship ceremonies affirmation ceremonies and other events around Australia. Local government councils, community organisations, schools and others in the community are encouraged to participate in Australian Citizenship Day.

For ideas on events and activities for celebrating Australian Citizenship Day visit the department's citizenship website at **www.citizenship.gov.au**



Chapter 7

Who to invite to a ceremony

For requirements regarding who to invite to private ceremonies see Chapter 4 Special purpose ceremonies.

Candidates

The department sends each local government council the names of approved candidates waiting to attend a citizenship ceremony in their local area. Councils should advise candidates of the date of the ceremony for which they are scheduled as soon as possible.

Community organisations may identify potential candidates from the local community or from within the community organisation. Community organisations should contact their closest departmental office at least three months in advance of the proposed ceremony date to discuss arrangements.

Inviting candidates

Candidates are invited to attend their ceremony by letter. Depending on local arrangements, invitation letters are sent to candidates either by the local government council or by the state or territory office of the department.

For ceremonies conducted by community organisations, the department will generally send out invitations.

Invitation letters to candidates should include the following advice:

- Date, time and venue for the ceremony and expected arrival time.
- That candidates 16 years of age and over must bring their notification letter and a form of identification to the ceremony. Identification requirements are explained below.



- That children under 16 years are not required to make a pledge of commitment or attend a ceremony although they are welcome and encouraged to do so if they wish. Children under the age of 16 years listed on a ceremony pledge list as part of a parent's application only become Australian citizens when that parent becomes an Australian citizen. The parent becomes an Australian citizen by making a pledge of commitment at the citizenship ceremony.
- That candidates who wish to make the pledge of commitment on a holy book or scripture of their choice should bring it to the ceremony.
- That a voluntary affirmation ceremony (if included in the program) will take place after the citizenship ceremony.
- Any special arrangements concerning seating and the taking of photographs or video during the ceremony.
- The number of relatives and friends each candidate may invite to attend the ceremony and subsequent social gathering.
- That candidates may be asked to sign a form giving their consent for photographs, video or film taken during the ceremony to be used for future citizenship promotional purposes.

Identifying the candidates

Candidates must be correctly identified on arrival to verify that the people who will be conferred Australian citizenship are in fact the people who were approved by the department for conferral of Australian citizenship. Organisers of citizenship ceremonies should use their best judgement to satisfy themselves that each candidate has been correctly identified.

Officers of the department will attend and assist in identifying the candidates for citizenship ceremonies arranged by community organisations. Name badges for candidates, official guests and others may be helpful.

Identification requirements for candidates 16 years of age and over

A driver's licence, passport or other official document which includes a photograph is preferred.

For candidates who do not have any form of photographic identification, at least three documents bearing their name, address and signature, for example, bank statements, credit cards or bills are required.

Candidates should be asked to bring their invitation letter to the ceremony to assist with identification.



Government representatives

The minister must be invited to all citizenship ceremonies.

When the minister is not able to attend, the minister may nominate a representative. The minister's representative may be a government member of the House of Representatives, a government senator, a senior officer of the department or another person deemed appropriate by the minister.

When the minister is in attendance the minister will have precedence to assume the role of presiding officer, conduct the citizenship ceremony and confer Australian citizenship on candidates. Any late changes to a ceremony program must be advised to the department as soon as practicable, so that the minister can be informed accordingly.

As well as the minister, organisers must also invite:

- the local federal member/s of parliament
- a senator from a different political party to that of the local federal member. Where an invited senator is not able to attend, another senator from that political party should be invited.
- the local member/s of the state or territory parliament
- representation from local government when ceremonies are arranged by community organisations.

The presence of these official guests representing all three levels of government serves to introduce new citizens to Australia's three-tiered democratic system of government as well as to formally welcome them into the Australian community. The focus is on the invitation of *elected* representatives. Invited elected representatives cannot send a representative to act in an official capacity on their behalf.

While a senator or member cannot be prevented from asking an individual to attend on their behalf, the nominated person should not be included in the official party and under no circumstances should that person be invited to speak.

The above guidelines also apply during a caretaker period. The emphasis remains on *elected* representatives welcoming new citizens to the local community. Candidates for election may attend the ceremony in a private capacity however they should not receive an official invitation and should not be included in the official party. The apolitical nature of the ceremony must be maintained.



Other official representatives

Representatives of community and religious organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders may also be invited.

Australian Electoral Commission representatives

All organisations conducting citizenship ceremonies should notify the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) of forthcoming citizenship ceremonies to facilitate electoral enrolment of new citizens. Wherever possible, staff from AEC will attend ceremonies where ten or more candidates will be present to assist the electoral enrolment process and to collect completed enrolment forms.

Facilitating electoral enrolment

The department provides pre-printed, personalised electoral enrolment forms containing the personal details of each candidate to those conducting citizenship ceremonies.

As enrolment and voting is compulsory for Australian citizens, new citizens should be encouraged to complete their enrolment forms once they have made the pledge and been presented with their Australian citizenship certificate.

Candidates should:

- check that their pre-printed details on the electoral enrolment form are correct and, if needed, correct any errors
- complete the proof of identity section of the form
- sign the form (in some States this must be witnessed), and
- hand the completed forms to staff from the AEC if present, or post to the AEC as soon as possible (reply paid 9867 in their capital city).



Chapter 8

Publicising a ceremony

Every effort should be made by organisers to publicise forthcoming ceremonies and to encourage local and even national media to attend and report on the event. Publicising citizenship ceremonies promotes to the wider community the contribution of new citizens to Australia. It also encourages others to acquire Australian citizenship.

Media coverage can be enhanced by providing local media, for example, newspapers, newsletters and magazines with details of the ceremony as far in advance as possible. Details provided should include a list of speakers and important guests. Local community organisations could similarly be informed. Details of candidates should not be provided to media without their consent.

Where a ceremony could be of interest beyond the local district, consideration could be given to alerting the national media. Examples of such situations include:

- an unusually large ceremony
- where the ceremony is planned to coincide with a local or national event such as Australia Day or Australian Citizenship Day
- where candidates include prominent figures in local affairs, the arts, sport or other fields, or
- where there are particularly interesting features planned for the ceremony.

When the minister responsible for citizenship is in attendance, liaison with their media adviser is required for any press releases or media coverage. Public affairs officers of the department can also assist with publicity arrangements.



Obtaining the written consent of candidates for publicity

It is essential that candidates are informed in advance that ceremonies may attract media attention and that departmental officers or representatives of the media may attend ceremonies to film, photograph or interview candidates for promotional purposes. The most opportune time to convey this information is in the invitation letter.

A departmental consent form is available to obtain the written consent of candidates as well as their family and friends for their personal information and/or image to be used for citizenship promotional purposes. Depending on the circumstances of the ceremony, candidates may be asked to complete the consent form prior to attending their ceremony, on the day at the time of their registration, or at the time they are filmed, photographed or interviewed.

While some new citizens may welcome publicity others may not. Local government councils and community organisations should be aware of privacy obligations. For more information see the website www.privacy.gov.au



Chapter 9

Legal requirements for conducting a ceremony

There are three legal elements essential in all citizenship ceremonies. A suggested citizenship ceremony program and order of events indicating how these elements are incorporated is presented in Chapter 13.

Presiding officer must be authorised by the minister

Under the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* a person before whom the pledge is made must be authorised by the Australian Government minister responsible for citizenship matters. These people are usually referred to as presiding officers. Authorisation is given to Australian citizens only and is specific to a position or person.

Presiding officers have no power to appoint a proxy. However, a person may temporarily perform the duties of the presiding officer when they are:

- acting in place of an authorised person for a period of time, or
- carrying out the bulk of the duties of an authorised position.

A list of people and positions that have been authorised by the minister is available from state and territory offices of the department. Departmental officers with authorisation may be available to preside at ceremonies if required.

To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, presiding officers should not confer Australian citizenship on family members or close friends at private functions.

Presiding officer must read the address

Under Regulation 8 of the *Australian Citizenship Regulations 2007* the presiding officer must read aloud the address specified in schedule 1 of the Regulations (preamble for citizenship ceremonies) to the person making the pledge. The address is at Appendix 2.

Candidates must make the pledge

Under the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, most people 16 years of age and over applying for citizenship by conferral must make the pledge of commitment as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia before the presiding officer.

The presiding officer should ensure that each candidate makes the pledge by reciting the pledge out loud. If a candidate fails to make the pledge during a public citizenship ceremony they should be advised that they are not a citizen and should again be given the opportunity to make the pledge. Candidates who do not make the pledge do not become Australian citizens and must not be presented with a certificate.

Pledge cards

Before the ceremony begins each candidate should receive an Australian Citizenship Pledge card, displaying the words of the pledge of commitment as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia. It may be kept as a memento.

There are two forms of the pledge, clearly marked on the back of the pledge cards.

- Pledge No 1 includes the words 'under God'.
- Pledge No 2 does not include reference to God.

Pledge cards are available from the state and territory offices of the department. (For the two forms of the pledge see Appendix 2.)

The version of the pledge which each candidate wish to make is specified on the Australian citizenship pledge verification list forwarded to

local government councils by the department. Pledge cards may be placed on the candidates' seats or handed to candidates on arrival. Children under 16 years of age are not required to make the pledge but may do so.



The Pledge of Commitment must be made by candidates at their citizenship ceremony.



Candidates with disabilities

If a candidate is unable to repeat the pledge because of a substantial impairment such as a stroke, the pledge may be read to the candidate. The candidate may then acknowledge by some pre-arranged signal that they understand and agree to be bound by the words of the pledge.

Holy books and scriptures

It is not a requirement for candidates to use a holy book or scripture or hold up their hand/s when making the pledge, however, candidates should be permitted to do so if they wish.

Candidates who wish to use a holy book or scripture when making the pledge, can bring the holy book or scripture of their choice to the citizenship ceremony.

Note: The General Secretary of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society has requested that members of the Jewish faith be permitted to cover their heads and open the Bible at the Old Testament when making Pledge No 1.

Administering the pledge

As a matter of practice the presiding officer ‘administers’ (that is reads out and the candidates repeat) the pledge.

The presiding officer:

- calls on candidates who are to make Pledge No 1 to stand
- asks candidates who wish to make the pledge on a holy book to hold their book in their hands
- reminds candidates that the words of the pledge are set out on their pledge card and that they must recite the pledge out loud in order to become Australian citizens
- invites candidates to repeat Pledge No 1 together
- asks candidates to be seated.

The presiding officer then calls on candidates who are to make Pledge No 2 to stand. The procedure as for Pledge No 1 is repeated.

Alternatively the presiding officer may choose to call first on candidates who wish to make Pledge No 2.

Chapter 10

Important elements of a ceremony



National symbols

In keeping with other Commonwealth official occasions, the following national symbols must be present in a citizenship ceremony.

These are generally available through the local federal member of parliament under the Constituents Request Program.

Further guidance on displaying national symbols is available on the It's an Honour website at www.itsanhonour.gov.au

Commonwealth Coat of Arms and portrait of the Queen

The Commonwealth Coat of Arms and an official portrait or photograph of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II are to be displayed. The portrait should be placed behind the presiding officer or in another prominent position at the same level and to the left (when facing) of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

The Australian National Flag

The Australian National Flag is to be displayed in one of the following ways:

- Flat against a surface, whether horizontally or vertically, with the top left (first) quarter placed uppermost on the observers' left as viewed from the front
- On a staff, with the top left quarter placed in the position nearest the top of the staff. When carried, the flag should be aloft and free, or
- On a flag rope (halyard) with the top left quarter placed uppermost, raised as close as possible to the top and the flag rope taut.



Other Australian flags

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags may be displayed at citizenship ceremonies.

Australian National Anthem

The Australian National Anthem (Advance Australia Fair) must be played at the end of the ceremony. This may be played as a live performance or a recording. All attendees at the ceremony should be invited to join in singing the National Anthem. The words of the National Anthem should be provided.

Speeches

Minister's speech or message

When the minister attends a ceremony, he/she must be invited to speak immediately after the opening address, before any other official speeches.

When the minister's representative attends a ceremony, he/she must read the minister's message. Organisers will be advised by the minister's office of the identity of the minister's representative before the ceremony. The presiding officer can then incorporate reference to the minister's representative in the opening address.

When neither the minister nor his/her representative attend a ceremony, the minister's message provided by the department must be read by the presiding officer. It must be read in its entirety and without amendment immediately after the opening address, before any other official speeches.

Please ensure you have the latest message from the minister. It can be downloaded from the citizenship website at **www.citizenship.gov.au**

Speeches by official guests

Speeches by other official guests must immediately follow the minister's speech or the minister's message (if the minister is not in attendance). All elected local representatives at the federal, state or territory, and local government level, should over time have an opportunity to provide a welcoming speech to citizenship candidates. Not all elected representatives should speak at every ceremony. This will ensure that the number of speeches is manageable, particularly where local areas cross a number of electorates.

Other official guests do not have to be invited to speak. However subject to the number of speeches by elected representatives, a few brief messages of welcome from local organisations and/or local celebrities will contribute to a feeling of welcome and fellowship.



Suggested length and content of speeches

To manage the length of the ceremony, each speech should ideally be less than five minutes long. The presiding officer may wish to draw the following matters to the attention of those who will be speaking.

- Speeches must be relevant and appropriate to the occasion and must avoid issues that may be contentious from a political, racial or sectarian point of view.
- Candidates come from a variety of circumstances and backgrounds. Assumptions and generalisations about their background and their reasons for coming to Australia should be avoided.
- Speakers may welcome candidates as new citizens and refer to the economic, social and cultural contribution that new citizens make to Australia. Speakers could refer, for example, to the development of their local district emphasising the role of new citizens in industry, civic, cultural affairs or sport. Speakers could also refer to the many benefits, such as the democratic way of life and economic opportunities which Australia has to offer its new citizens.
- Citizenship ceremonies must not be used as forums for political, partisan or religious expression or for the distribution of political or religious material.

Australian citizenship certificates

It is not a legal requirement that:

- Australian citizenship certificates be presented to candidates attending a ceremony, or
- Australian citizenship certificates be presented by the presiding officer or other authorised person.

However, both of these are common practices.

It is the making of the pledge before an authorised person that is the final legal requirement for acquiring Australian citizenship by conferral.

In most cases, the department will provide Australian citizenship certificates to local government councils in advance of citizenship ceremonies for distribution to candidates at the ceremony. On the rare occasion that certificates are not available, the ceremony should continue as scheduled with the certificates forwarded to the new citizens at a later date.

For community organisations, the departmental officer attending the ceremony will generally bring the Australian citizenship certificates to the ceremony.

Safeguarding Australian citizenship certificates

Australian citizenship certificates are accountable documents and must be subject to strict security measures at all times. They must be stored in a secure location such as a safe. Access to them should be restricted to a minimum number of people.

Presiding officer's signature

Australian citizenship certificates incorporate a dotted line at the bottom front right, where the presiding officer may sign or stamp their signature and include their title of office.

Presenting Australian citizenship certificates to candidates

When family members are conferred Australian citizenship at the same ceremony, each family member should be presented with their own certificate.

If children are not part of the ceremony, children's certificates may be handed to the parent.

Children under the age of 16 years listed on a ceremony pledge list as part of a parent's application only become Australian citizens when that parent becomes an Australian citizen. The parent becomes an Australian citizen by making the pledge at the citizenship ceremony.

An issue arises if the children attend the ceremony in the expectation of acquiring Australian citizenship without the parent whose application they are a part of being present.

Children in this situation do not acquire Australian citizenship (even if they make the pledge or their other parent is present) and should not be provided with Australian citizenship certificates. They should be advised to take the matter up with an office of the department as soon as possible.



An Australian citizenship certificate



Claims that information on Australian citizenship certificates is incorrect

If a candidate claims that information on their Australian citizenship certificate is incorrect, they should still be allowed to make the pledge and be presented with the certificate. They should be advised to take the matter up with an office of the department as soon as possible.

Australian citizenship certificates of candidates who fail to attend a ceremony

Where candidates fail to attend a scheduled ceremony or do not make the pledge, their certificates must be returned by registered mail, with the signed pledge list immediately following the ceremony to the office of the department that provided the certificates.

Altering Australian citizenship certificates

Altering Australian citizenship certificates is an offence under the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* and carries serious penalties. Apart from signing the certificates as indicated above, organisations conducting citizenship ceremonies do not have legal authority to amend, add or delete any information on the certificates.

Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony

To further enhance the meaning and symbolism of citizenship ceremonies, organisations are encouraged to conduct an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony at the conclusion of the citizenship ceremony. The affirmation ceremony must be led by an Australian citizen. Information on Australian citizenship affirmation ceremonies is provided in Chapter 15.

Indigenous elements

The department encourages incorporating Indigenous elements into citizenship ceremonies. This enhances awareness and understanding by new citizens as well as the wider community of Indigenous culture and heritage and the status of Indigenous people as the first Australians.

If a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is not in attendance then the presiding officer or other appropriate person should publicly acknowledge the traditional inhabitants of the land where the citizenship ceremony is taking place. An example of an acknowledgment could be as follows:

'I recognise the living culture of the xxx people and the unique contribution they make to the life of the xxx region.'



The following are a range of ideas for incorporating Indigenous elements into or within citizenship ceremonies:

- Invite a local Indigenous leader or leaders to Acknowledge Country and/or perform a Welcome to Country ceremony.
- Invite members of local Indigenous communities to perform other traditional Indigenous ceremonies, for example a smoking ceremony, which is generally used to 'cleanse' a site.
- Invite Indigenous artists to perform or a local Indigenous leader or personality to address the citizenship ceremony.

For further information regarding the significance of Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country within citizenship ceremonies, contact Reconciliation Australia via email enquiries@reconciliation.org.au or telephone (02) 6273 9200.

Further information is available at the Reconciliation Australia website

www.reconciliation.org.au



Chapter 11

Social elements

Entertainment

Entertainment befitting the occasion may be incorporated into a ceremony.

Gifts

Local government councils and community organisations conducting citizenship ceremonies may choose to present gifts to new citizens to mark the acquisition of Australian citizenship. This is entirely voluntary on the part of those conducting citizenship ceremonies.

Examples of appropriate gifts include:

- an item reflecting Indigenous culture
- a native plant (trees or large shrubs are not appropriate)
- the words of the Australian National Anthem
- a free copy of a photograph of the occasion.



Social gathering

Citizenship ceremonies are generally followed by a social gathering which includes refreshments. In making these arrangements, organisers should take into account any special dietary or religious requirements of candidates.



Sing Australia Choir, Australia Day 2008



Chapter 12

Tasks to be completed after the ceremony

Australian citizenship pledge verification list

The department provides two copies of the Australian citizenship pledge verification list (pledge list) for each ceremony conducted by councils. This is a listing of candidates expected to make the pledge at the ceremony and includes some personal details of candidates designed to assist ceremony organisers to correctly identify candidates.

Signing and returning the pledge list

It is a legal requirement that each candidate who is making the pledge be formally registered by the department. To do this, the department relies on organisers of citizenship ceremonies to return pledge lists promptly. Delays can result in significant problems being encountered by new citizens, for example, when applying for an Australian passport.

It is essential therefore, that the presiding officer signs the pledge lists immediately after the conclusion of a ceremony, confirming that each person on the list has made the pledge. The names of people who failed to attend the ceremony or make the pledge should be deleted by ruling through their names.

One copy of the completed and signed pledge list must then be forwarded to the department immediately—together with any unused Australian citizenship certificates.

Pledge lists and certificates should reach the department no later than one week after the ceremony.

The second signed copy of the pledge list should be given to staff of the AEC (if attending the ceremony) or forwarded to them by mail. The AEC provides return envelopes for this purpose.



Disclosing names and addresses of new citizens to members of parliament

The names and addresses of candidates on the pledge list are to be used by organisations only for the primary purpose of facilitating the conduct of citizenship ceremonies, for example, to identify the candidates and manage invitations and RSVPs.

The government views the improper use or disclosure of personal information provided for the purposes of citizenship ceremonies as completely inappropriate and has a policy of actively policing such use or disclosure. Inappropriate use of personal information could lead to withdrawal of authorisation to conduct citizenship ceremonies.

Whether local federal, state and territory members of parliament attend the ceremony or not, it is important and appropriate that they have the opportunity to welcome new citizens as formal members of the Australian community.

Local government councils should forward the names and addresses of new citizens to local federal, state and territory members of parliament where this is requested. A welcome from a local member of parliament facilitates future contact between the new citizens and their representatives. This is an authorised secondary use of candidates' personal details.

Disclosure of personal information in this way does not contravene state privacy legislation when councils accompany the information with advice that clearly states the names and addresses of new citizens are disclosed to local members of parliament solely for the secondary purpose of welcoming new citizens into the community.

The advice should also clearly state that the names and addresses of new citizens should not be forwarded to other persons or organisations, or used by local members of parliament for any other purpose.

New citizens are informed through application forms for citizenship by conferral that their information may be disclosed to members of parliament for this purpose.



Chapter 13

Suggested citizenship ceremony program and order of events

The names of the presiding officer, administrative officer and official guests should be inserted in the program.

1.30 pm	Candidates arrive and their identity is verified. Candidates should be briefed on the sequence of the ceremony and the order in which they will be called to make the pledge.
1.55 pm	Official party enters and those present stand.
2.00 pm	[<i>Administrative officer</i>] welcomes all present
2.02 pm	Welcome to Country or Indigenous acknowledgement
2.05 pm	[<i>Presiding officer</i>] welcomes all present; introduces the official guests; delivers the opening address (suggested wording appears at Appendix 5); and foreshadows the affirmation ceremony.
2.15 pm	[<i>Presiding or administrative officer</i>] introduces each speaker in the following order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister or minister's representative. • If the minister has not sent a representative, the presiding officer reads the minister's message. • Other speakers.
2.30 pm	[<i>Presiding officer</i>] reads the address (preamble for citizenship ceremonies) to candidates (Appendix 2) making the pledge.



2.32 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding officer</i>] administers the pledge (Appendix 3) to candidates.</p>
2.35 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding officer, administrative officer or official guest</i>] presents Australian citizenship certificates to new citizens and congratulates them on becoming Australian citizens. Each candidate who has made the pledge is called forward individually to receive their Australian citizenship certificate.</p> <p>Australian citizenship certificates for children may be handed either to the child's parent when the parent is presented with their own certificate or directly to the child.</p> <p>A gift may also be presented to new citizens.</p>
2.50 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding or administrative officer</i>] advises that new citizens may enrol to vote now by completing the electoral enrolment form given to them. If staff from the AEC are present, advise that those officers are available to help.</p>
2.53 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding officer</i>] congratulates the new citizens and introduces the dignitary who will conduct the Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony.</p>
2.54 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding officer or other appropriate Australian citizen</i>] conducts the affirmation ceremony. They invite all Australians who wish to publicly affirm their commitment to Australia and its people, to stand in their place and join in repeating the affirmation. Non-citizens should be invited to join at the second line of the affirmation.</p> <p>It should be made clear that recitation of the affirmation is voluntary and that it has no legal effect.</p>
2.57 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding officer</i>] asks all present to stand for the Australian National Anthem.</p>
3.00 pm	<p>[<i>Presiding officer</i>] concludes the ceremony (suggested wording appears at Appendix 6); and invites new citizens, official guests and all present to join him/her for light refreshments</p>



Chapter 14

Checklist for conducting a ceremony

Contact the department

- Local government councils must provide the department with a schedule of ceremony dates three to six months in advance.
- Community organisations must contact the department at least three months before a planned ceremony date.

Organise the ceremony

- Invite the candidates. If the ceremony is to be hosted by a community organisation, the department will generally invite the candidates.
 - Invite the minister, elected government officials and representatives of local community groups. Advise officials if they will be invited to make a speech.
 - Ensure the presiding officer is authorised by the minister to administer the pledge.
 - Advise the department if the minister or a representative will attend. If neither is attending, contact the department to obtain the current minister's message.
 - Advise the AEC of the time and date of the ceremony.
 - Prepare a ceremony program.
 - Ensure the Australian citizenship certificates, pledge cards, pledge verification list, electoral enrolment forms, affirmation cards if required and publicity consent forms have been received from the department. Departmental officers will bring these items to ceremonies conducted by community organisations.
 - Arrange for the national symbols to be displayed and the National Anthem to be played.
 - Arrange for an Indigenous acknowledgement, a social gathering and an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony to be incorporated in the ceremony.
-



On the day

- Display the national symbols.
- Identify the candidates correctly against the pledge verification list and their identity documents. At ceremonies conducted by community organisations, this will be carried out by departmental officers.
- Obtain the written consent of candidates to publicity if the ceremony is to be used for promotional purposes.
- Issue pledge cards, electoral enrolment forms (and affirmation cards if required) to the candidates.

During the ceremony

- The presiding officer must read the minister's message if the minister or minister's representative is not attending.
- Other officials are invited to speak after the delivery of the minister's speech or message.
- Presiding officer must read aloud the address specified in schedule 1 of the Regulations (see Appendix 2) prior to candidates making the pledge.
- Candidates must make the pledge.
- Candidates who have made the pledge are presented with their Australian citizenship certificates.
- Arrange for electoral enrolment forms to be completed.
- Conduct an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony if arranged.
- Play the Australian National Anthem at the end of the ceremony.
- Invite all to the social gathering if applicable.

Shortly afterwards

- Complete and return both Australian citizenship pledge verification lists; one to the department and the other to the AEC.
- Forward the names and addresses of new citizens to local federal and state/territory members of parliament, where requested.
- Return all Australian citizenship certificates that were not presented at the ceremony to the office of the department that issued them by registered mail.



Registration desk for new citizens at the Australia Day 2008 citizenship ceremony, Commonwealth Park, Canberra



Chapter 15

Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony

What is the Australian citizenship affirmation?

The Australian citizenship affirmation is a statement affirming loyalty and commitment to Australia and its people. It is based on the pledge made by candidates at citizenship ceremonies in order to become Australian citizens.

It reads:

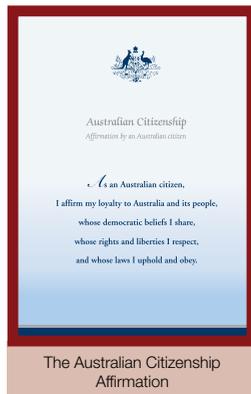
As an Australian citizen

I affirm my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect,
and whose laws I uphold and obey.

What is an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony?

An Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony is a short ceremony where all present are given the opportunity to publicly affirm their loyalty and commitment to Australia and its people by reciting the Australian citizenship affirmation.

Affirmation ceremonies increase awareness of Australian citizenship, promote community involvement and participation, and help people feel that they belong. They also help build pride in Australians about their citizenship.





Legal status of Australian citizenship affirmation ceremonies

Unlike citizenship ceremonies, affirmation ceremonies have no status in law and no legal effect. No records on participants are required by the department. People taking part in affirmation ceremonies are not required to prove their Australian residence or citizenship status. To avoid confusion with official evidence of Australian citizenship, no certificate should be given to people who participate in an affirmation ceremony.

Who can host an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony?

Australian citizenship affirmation ceremonies may be hosted by community organisations, schools and local government councils at special events such as community meetings, functions, festivals and school assemblies. They can also be part of celebrations for special occasions such as Australia Day (26 January) and Australian Citizenship Day (17 September).

Who can participate in an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony?

Everyone is welcome and participation is voluntary.

Many Australians would not have had an opportunity to declare their commitment to Australia and its people at a citizenship ceremony because they were born in Australia.

Some overseas-born Australian citizens have previously pledged their commitment to Australia at a citizenship ceremony. They may however wish to join in and re-affirm their loyalty to Australia and its people.

There are also many people living in Australia who, although not yet Australian citizens, consider Australia their home. They too may wish to express their loyalty to Australia and show their support for the values that are part of Australian citizenship by joining in the affirmation at the second line.

Who can lead an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony?

An Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony must be led by an Australian citizen.

They may be a person of some standing in the community or school, for example an official guest, a leader within the community, a federal or state/territory parliamentarian or other appropriate person.

For local government councils that incorporate an affirmation ceremony into a citizenship ceremony, the affirmation ceremony may be led by the presiding officer who is usually the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.

As Australian citizenship affirmation ceremonies are significant occasions conveying important symbolism they should be conducted with meaning and dignity.

How to host an Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony

An Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony should be foreshadowed at the beginning of the function to allow those present to consider whether they wish to participate. It should be made clear that participation is voluntary and that reciting the affirmation has no legal effect.

Australian citizenship affirmation cards with the words of the affirmation should be placed on seats or handed to guests as they arrive. This will allow members of the audience to become familiar with the words of the affirmation. Australian citizenship affirmation cards are available from state and territory offices of the department or by visiting the Australian citizenship website at **www.citizenship.gov.au**

The person leading the Australian citizenship affirmation ceremony should invite all who wish to publicly affirm their commitment to Australia and its people, to stand and join in repeating the affirmation.



Cake to celebrate Australian Citizenship Day



Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

- **Presiding officer:** A person who has been authorised in writing by the Australian Government minister responsible for citizenship matters to confer Australian citizenship. In the case of local government councils, this is usually the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.
- **Administrative officer:** A local government official or other person who assists the presiding officer in arranging and conducting the ceremony.
- **Community organisation:** An organisation that is not-for-profit, whose activities are intended to benefit its members and the wider Australian community. Examples include Apex, Lions, and Rotary Clubs, Scouts and Guides Associations and Surf Life Saving Associations.
- **The department:** Australian Government department responsible for citizenship matters.
- **Minister:** Australian Government minister responsible for citizenship matters.
- **Pledge:** The pledge of commitment as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia made by candidates under section 26 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* as the last step in becoming Australian citizens. There are two forms of the pledge:
 - Pledge 1 using the words ‘under God’
 - Pledge 2 without reference to God.

The words are contained on Australian Citizenship Pledge cards available from the department. Both pledges are reproduced in Appendix 3.

- **Australian citizenship certificate:** Evidentiary notice given to a person stating that the person is an Australian citizen at a particular time.



Appendix 2

Address to be read by the presiding officer to candidates making the pledge. Schedule 1 of the Australian Citizenship Regulations 2007

Preamble for citizenship ceremonies

Australian citizenship represents full and formal membership of the community of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Australian citizenship is a common bond, involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians, while respecting their diversity.

Persons on whom Australian citizenship is conferred enjoy these rights and undertake to accept these obligations:

- (a) by pledging loyalty to Australia and its people; and*
- (b) by sharing their democratic beliefs; and*
- (c) by respecting their rights and liberties; and*
- (d) by upholding and obeying the laws of Australia.*



Appendix 3

Pledge of commitment as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia

Form of Pledge No 1

From this time forward, under God,
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect, and
whose laws I will uphold and obey.

Form of Pledge No 2

From this time forward,
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect, and
whose laws I will uphold and obey.



Appendix 4

The Australian National Anthem

Advance Australia Fair

Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

Composed by Peter Dodds McCormick



Appendix 5

Opening address—suggested paragraphs

Below are some suggested paragraphs for the presiding officer's opening address. These paragraphs are intended as a guide only and can be drawn on for incorporation into the speech.

Indigenous acknowledgment

- I would like to acknowledge the traditions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, (the xxx people), on whose land we are gathered here today.
- or
- I recognise the living culture of the xxx people and the unique contribution they make to the life of the xxx region.

Introduction

- Welcome distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.
- This citizenship ceremony is being conducted as prescribed in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* and the Australian Citizenship Regulations 2007 under the authority of the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship.
- I have been authorised as a person who may receive the pledge as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia.
- Making the pledge is the final step in your becoming an Australian citizen.
- I am pleased to see so many citizenship candidates here today. I would like to congratulate each of you on your decision to become an Australian citizen—a decision welcomed not only by me, but by all Australians.
- Citizenship is a common bond which unites all Australians, whether they are Australia's traditional inhabitants, first generation migrants or the descendants of earlier settlers. Our rich heritage stems from the contributions made by all of us.



Commitment to Australia and common values

- Acquiring Australian citizenship is a public declaration of your commitment to Australia.
- Acquiring Australian citizenship enables those doing so to participate fully in our inclusive society, realise aspirations and achieve their full potential, regardless of their race, background, gender, religion, language or place of birth.
- The culture and traditions that migrants bring to Australia, including their language and religion, contribute in making Australia a vibrant community.
- We have built a nation in which people can bring all that they are to Australia. We are all free to express and share our cultural heritage within the law, and we can all participate, contribute and belong as Australians.
- Your Australian citizenship is also about making a contribution.
- Australia has a commitment to various values and institutions. These include parliamentary democracy, equality before the law, freedom of the individual, freedom of speech and religion, equality between men and women, and equality of opportunity for all.
- As Australians, you will be members of a community which is democratic and in which everyone has equal rights and freedom of opportunity.
- Only by accepting our duty as Australian citizens can we make sure that our rights and those of our children will be protected now and in the future.
- You are about to undertake a new commitment, a new responsibility.
- Australian citizenship entails responsibilities and privileges.
- Citizenship is a public commitment to embracing Australian values and institutions. Citizenship brings responsibilities and duties—to obey the laws, to register on the electoral roll and vote, to serve on a jury if called to do so, and to defend Australia should the need arise. Citizenship also brings civil and social rights—the right to express your cultural heritage and beliefs coupled with a responsibility to accept the rights of others to express their heritage and beliefs.
- Our ceremony today recognises that citizenship is a common bond made meaningful because it embraces an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all peoples.



Cultural diversity

- Australia's strength lies in its people. Our people have made Australia what it is, building our nation into a vibrant, open and diverse society of which we can all be proud.
- We hope that those who have not yet applied for Australian citizenship will consider taking the step that those candidates here today have taken and commit themselves to being a part of Australia's future.
- We all need to belong to a family or a community, to share a past and to hold common hopes and goals for the future. By becoming an Australian citizen, you are showing that you want to be a part of Australia's future.
- No one who applies for Australian citizenship is expected to renounce their cultural identity, customs or traditions.
- Australia's heritage is made richer by contributions from people from many lands.
- Today's Australia has been built from the combined contributions of our Indigenous people and those who came here later from all over the world. We accept and respect the cultures and traditions of newcomers and, in return, expect that they also respect and accept the cultural differences they find here. While we embrace and celebrate the diversity of the Australian people, we also aim to build a cohesive and unified nation of people. Australian citizenship lies at the heart of a nation founded on all-round equality.
- The aim of all Australians is to build a strong, harmonious and unified nation. To do this we work together.
- It is important as an Australian citizen to understand how our society works and the democratic principles that guide us. It is also vital to understand how we, as responsible individuals, can contribute to a better future.
- Australia can take enormous pride in your decision to freely choose to become part of this nation as a fully participating member. Australia gains by your commitment to it and through the contribution you will make to its wellbeing.



Appendix 6

Closing address—suggested paragraphs

Below are some suggested paragraphs for the presiding officer's closing address. These paragraphs are intended as a guide only and can be drawn on for incorporation into the speech.

- I welcome you as citizens of Australia and I congratulate you on your decision to become an Australian citizen.
- Choosing to become a citizen is a very significant expression of your pride in being part of Australia's dynamic and diverse society.
- You have made a pledge of commitment to Australia and its people and have been provided with a memento card to mark the occasion of the commitment.
- Australian citizens value many basic rights including equality of treatment, equality under the law, democracy and equal opportunity for all.
- Our culturally diverse society is founded on a 'fair go' for all Australians.
- Now that you are Australian citizens you enjoy specific privileges and responsibilities, such as the right to vote to help elect Australia's governments and access to an Australian passport.
- Australia's future success depends on the way we work together.
- Your Australian citizenship is a symbol of your commitment to Australia and your formal membership of the Australian community.
- Australia gives all Australians the opportunity to live and grow in a free and open society and to share in the common good. In return, we owe Australia our duty as good neighbours and good citizens.