

Government Commitment to Multicultural Affairs

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The Hon Philip Ruddock, MP, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Press Release

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Canberra, 3 May 1996

The Government takes very seriously its commitment to Multicultural Affairs the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Philip Ruddock said today.

"The decision to move the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs was announced by the Prime Minister on 8 March, making it a very public process," Mr Ruddock said.

"In appointing me as Australia's first Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Prime Minister stated my brief entailed taking an active and strategic interest in activities across a wide range of Commonwealth policies and programmes."

"The advisory role for Multicultural Affairs and its input to Government decision-making is underscored by this brief."

"My role is to ensure that multicultural issues are a distinct and unifying force in Australia."

"The importance of multicultural issues has been clearly recognised by being included in the title of my portfolio."

"I have also stated on many occasions since becoming Minister that my Department will undertake the Multicultural Affairs function."

"By transferring Multicultural Affairs to the Immigration portfolio we have opened up new opportunities for furthering the multicultural agenda by creating new synergies, better coordination of functions and providing greater opportunities to share knowledge and expertise."

"The Australian Institute for Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was established under the Coalition Government of Malcolm Fraser and later abolished by a Labor Government. It was only after community pressure that the ALP later agreed to establish OMA."

"Given Labor's record, in abolishing AIMA without a continuing role, I am surprised that my opposition counterpart would want to pursue this as an issue," Mr Ruddock said.