

# Commonwealth Parliamentary Debate – Arthur Calwell, November 1946

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## **The Minister for Immigration and Information, Arthur Calwell**

**22 November 1946**

There was a time just four years ago when Australia faced its gravest peril. Armies recruited from the teeming millions of Japan threatened to overrun our cities and broad hinterland. They were so many. We were so few. Today we are at peace. But, while all of us must work to perpetuate that peace, let us not forget that armed conflict remains a grim possibility, both in the New World and in the Old - a possibility against which we must guard with all the intelligence, all the realism, and all the energy that we can muster. Realising, therefore, the crucial importance to Australia of a policy of planned immigration, it is with great pleasure that I am today able to review, for the benefit of honourable members, the substantial progress that has already been made in bringing our plans to fruition.

In the forefront of our entire immigration programme are the free and assisted passage schemes designed to bring to these shores a steady flow of the best possible immigrant types from the United Kingdom ... However, we are not unmindful of the fact that many thousands of desirable people on the European continent are anxious to settle in our land. It is hoped that the governments of these countries will be prepared to participate in plans on the lines of the free and assisted passage schemes which have been entered into between the governments of

the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth...

Then there is the tragedy of Europe's army of displaced and persecuted people. As honourable members are aware, the various Allied governments have been subjected to strong pressure at international conferences to accept large quotas of these unfortunate men, women, and children. The Government, having regard to its responsibilities to Australian ex-servicemen, and having in mind the grave housing shortage still persisting throughout the Commonwealth, is not under present conditions in a position to commit itself in this matter; nevertheless, it considers that Australia should on humanitarian grounds make some contribution to the relief of certain of the distressed peoples of Europe. Approval has therefore been given for the admission of a limited number of these people, provided they are nominated by relatives in Australia who are in a position and willing to accommodate and maintain them.

While on the subject of foreign migration, I would like to emphasise that the Government's immigration policy is based on the principle that migrants from the United Kingdom shall be given every encouragement and assistance. It is my hope that for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom. Only time will tell how far this hope can be realised. We have already given indubitable evidence of our preference for the United Kingdom migrant by entering into agreements with the United Kingdom government for the granting of free and assisted passages to suitable people from the United Kingdom. Aliens are and will continue to be admitted only in such numbers and of such classes that they can be readily assimilated. Every precaution is taken to

ensure that they are desirable types, and they must satisfy consular or passport officers and security service officers that they are people of good character before their passports are visaed for travel to Australia ... The days of our isolation are over. We live in an age when the earth's surface seems to be contracting under the influence of scientific discoveries that almost baffle our imagination. The call to all Australians is to realise that without adequate numbers this wide brown land may not be held in another clash of arms, and to give their maximum assistance to every effort to expand its economy and assimilate more and more people who will come from overseas to link their fate with our destiny.