



# Media release

## Senator Chris Evans

Leader of the Government in the Senate  
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

115.08

**EMBARGOED UNTIL MIDNIGHT**

22 November 2008

### **New Citizenship test to focus on responsibilities and privileges**

The Rudd Government will overhaul the Australian Citizenship Test after a review by a committee of seven eminent Australians found the current test can be improved.

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, said the focus of the new test will be on the Pledge of Commitment that new Australians make when becoming citizens.

“The pledge is about our democratic beliefs, our laws and the rights, responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship,” Senator Evans said.

“It is crucial that prospective citizens understand those concepts so the questions in the new test will focus on the commitments in the pledge rather than being a general knowledge quiz about Australia.

“The Australian Citizenship Test Review Committee made the valid point that an understanding of our civic responsibilities and what it means to be a citizen is of fundamental importance to all citizens, whether we are Australian by birth or by choice.”

The Government will engage educational and civics experts to rewrite the citizenship resource book in plain English, divided into testable and non-testable sections.

The testable section, from which the new test questions will be drawn, will cover the concepts associated with the pledge. The non-testable section will contain general information about Australia, including its history, its culture and notable people like Sir Donald Bradman.

The pass mark for the citizenship test will rise from 60 per cent to 75 per cent and there will be no mandatory questions as in the current test.

“Raising the pass mark will ensure we have A-grade citizens who understand our democratic beliefs and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship,” the Minister said.

To help disadvantaged migrants and refugees who understand English but whose level of literacy may prevent them from undertaking a computer-based test, the Government will develop a citizenship course based on the material in the revamped resource book.

“We want to encourage all permanent residents to become citizens,” Senator Evans said.

“The review clearly identified a need to remove unintended barriers to citizenship for vulnerable groups of people and the changes will ensure the test does not disadvantage these people who most need our support.”

Participants will still be assessed on the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship as well as the legislative requirement of possessing a basic knowledge of the English language.

Senator Evans said the Government will not adopt the committee’s recommendations to publish the test questions or conduct the test in languages other than English. The Government also rejects the concept of earned citizenship because this would effectively introduce classes of citizenship.

“The Rudd Government is committed to the citizenship test,” Senator Evans said.

“It encourages potential citizens to find out more about Australia and understand the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.

“Citizenship is of fundamental importance to us all and is a critical factor in nation-building in our culturally diverse society.

“The government thanks committee chair Richard Woolcott and the committee members for their hard work in reviewing the Australian Citizenship Test, which included intensive public consultation across Australia.”

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship will engage professional experts as soon as possible to commence work on redrafting the resource book with a view to completing the book and new test by August 2009.

### **The Pledge of Commitment:**

*“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”.