

**BILL SHORTEN MP
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
SHADOW MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS & ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS
MEMBER FOR MARIBYRNONG**

MOTION ON AUSTRALIA'S NON-DISCRIMINATORY IMMIGRATION POLICY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 15 AUGUST 2018

I move, that this House:

1. Acknowledge the historic action of the Holt Government, with bipartisan support from the Australian Labor Party, in initiating the dismantling of the White Australia Policy.
2. Recognise that since 1973, successive Labor and Liberal National Party Governments have, with bipartisan support, pursued a racially non-discriminatory immigration policy to the overwhelming national and international benefit of Australia, and
3. Gives its unambiguous and unqualified commitment to the principle that whatever criteria applied by Australian Governments in exercising their sovereign right to determine the composition of the immigration intake, race, faith or ethnic origin shall never explicitly or implicitly be amongst them.

The three points in that motion are taken - word for word, just about – from a motion Prime Minister Hawke moved in this Parliament on 25 August 1988. Thirty years ago, next week.

It does take, I have to say, in this world, you have to be pretty outrageous to be condemned by everybody in the Australian Parliament, but Senator Anning has managed to do just this.

Condemned, because the blight of racism and discrimination is not new.

But truth is always the best defence against racism.

There is no historical experience and no contemporary evidence that race determines bad behaviour, none at all.

As I've said, this is not a new debate.

- Catholic and Jewish migrants have had to deal with discrimination because of their faith
- Successive waves of Italians and Greeks, Eastern Europeans after the Second World War
- Vietnamese migrants in the 1970s and 80s
- Newly arrived Muslim and African communities are facing it now
- The First Australians know all about the harm done by prejudice

But the simple truth is this: we are a stronger, better country because of all those who've come across the seas and joined their story to ours.

Mr Speaker,

I move this motion today because we need to defend the great national convention of Australian politics: race is beyond politics.

I'm asking the Government, and I'm pleased the Prime Minister and the Minister for Home Affairs are here, to support a motion which re-affirms the great bond of the major parties, to defend our national sense of decency, our trust in Australia.

I'm sure the Prime Minister will say comparable things, because I know that he is not a racist.

And this statement will be stronger if it is supported by the members of the House of Representatives.

We should do this together.

Mr Speaker,

In the corrosive and fragmented climate of public debate, it's become unfortunately common for

some to seek out attention by picking on minorities, the less powerful, by attacking in the most vile terms, normally someone who can't defend themselves.

Around the world, right-wing extremists are turning this into a political art form.

They say something hateful or homophobic or sexist or racist, something designed to humiliate and denigrate and hurt. And then when their comments are condemned they complain about 'political correctness gone mad' or the 'thought police' stifling their free speech, all the while basking in the media attention.

I understand that in one sense there might be a reason to simply ignore it, to starve the stupidity of oxygen, to treat it as beneath contempt.

But as leaders, as representatives of the Australian people, as servants of diverse communities in a great multicultural nation, we cannot stay silent in the face of racism.

We cannot ignore the kind of prejudice and hate that the Senator sought to unleash last night.

Free speech is a cherished value in Australian society but it is not an unfettered right to hurt, to bully, to intimidate, to make some Australians feel less equal than other Australians.

We have to call it out.

We must condemn it.

We have to speak truth.

We have to stand it against it, strong and united.

I acknowledge, already many Members and Senators, as word has gone out of this speech, have stood up and spoken out. I acknowledge their courage.

It is time for the Parliament to once again draw a line, to say 'no more'.

No more racism.

No more crossing the street, no more turning a blind eye.

No more: 'if we just ignore it, it will go away'.

This is not commentary in the social media, this is commentary in the Parliament of Australia.

It is time for every serious political party to show the courage to put candidates who advocate racism last.

Malcolm Fraser knew this, John Howard got there.

It is time for all of us to say enough.

No more deals with racist parties, no more preferences for racism.

When it comes to opposing racism, Labor will not hold back.

We will not play a straight bat, stay silent and hope for the best.

We know that racism fills the silences, discrimination thrives in the darkness.

The only way to stop it is to haul each of those hateful falsehoods into the light and expose them for the harmful fiction they are.

Labor is proud to be a party of multicultural Australia. The party of tolerance, a party to heal the nation.

Now, we weren't always there. But modern Labor, from the time of Whitlam and Hayden, Hawke and Keating and Evans and Beazley and Rudd and Gillard. Not once has the inclination of modern Labor altered.

Yes, we can establish better processes of integration. Yes, better promotion of understanding.

But let's be clear that Australia won't achieve any of what our nation's great destiny can be by pulling the racist lever.

As Senator Wong put it this morning, dividing our nation does not make us safer.

I think it's important to quote the former head of ASIO, the respected David Irvine.

He said:

"The tiny number of violent extremists does not represent the Islamic communities of Australia... ..it is grossly unfair to blame Muslims, who see themselves as a committed component of Australian multicultural society."

He went on to say:

"Our fight is with terrorism, it is not with Islam or with our Muslim community. The strongest defence against violent extremism lies within the Australian Muslim community itself."

Senator Anning needs to understand this. What he seeks to do, when he undermines our national harmony, when he says some Australians are better Australians than other Australians, he risks weakening our national security.

Mr Speaker,

Senator Anning's speech boiled down to one big lie about Australia: that every challenge we face can be blamed on our newest arrivals.

That all of our problems can be solved by turning back the clock and closing ourselves off from the world.

But here is the truth about Australia.

We are a nation made great by immigration.

We are strong because we are diverse.

We are a richer, smarter, more interesting and more prosperous destination because of people who have built a new life here.

Many who come here just with the clothes on their back.

People who have worked hard, started early and stayed late, opened businesses, built communities, looked after their neighbours, raised children, served in local, state and federal politics, cared for their elders, paid taxes, worn the uniform of our country.

People from all traditions, who have added their story to our own.

People from every country who have made us a better country.

People of every faith who share a common belief in Australia.

What Senator Anning and Senator Hanson and some of the rest pine for is the supposed 'good old days' of White Australia.

But they're not just insulting new arrivals. They are denigrating everything that all Australians have put together in the last half century, whether their families have been here for one generation, eight generations or two thousand generations.

And people who seek to lecture others about 'Australian values' need to know that racism is not an Australian value.

Mr Speaker,

As for the Senator's use of the term 'final solution'.

A phrase torn from the darkest pages of human history.

Two words which speak for the brutalisation and murder of millions.

Two words that evoke fear and grief and trauma and loss in diasporic families all over the world, and many others.

The Senator ridicules his critics by saying these words need to be seen in their context.

Well, that is exactly the problem.

This wasn't a piece of Twitter stupidity composed in haste. It was a first speech nine months in the making.

The context of these words is prejudice, it is a speech filled with prejudice.

And this, like everything else, deserves nothing but condemnation.

It has always been easy for candidates who style themselves as 'outsiders' or 'mavericks' to blame minorities, to demonise difference, to try and divide Australia by putting the blame on one particular group or another.

And truth and consistency doesn't trouble these people.

They say migrants are bludging on welfare – but they're also buying all our houses.

They say they're uneducated – but also filling our universities.

The list goes on.

Let's be very clear about this. Let's just speak truth.

Traffic jams on freeways and overcrowded trains aren't an argument against migration, they're proof that we need to build more better roads and public transport.

Low wages aren't an argument against migration, they're proof that we need policies to boost pay, improve bargaining and restore penalty rates.

The argument that people are being locked out of the housing market isn't an argument against migration, it's an argument for a fairer tax system and a level playing field.

Crime is not a migration problem. Violence is not a migration problem.

No one on this side of the house is minimising the challenges that real people face in their daily lives, this parliament should put forward plans and policies to help.

But we do not seek to insult the intelligence of the Australian people by blaming every problem in this country on decent, hard-working, law-abiding people who are just trying to make this a better place.

In recent times the great national convention of Australia - that race should be above politics - has been breached.

Now it is time for all of us who seek to represent the national interest to support this motion, to prove that the convention has not been broken.

To show that Australia's major parties stand against racism and prejudice.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, there is a lot of debate about the Australian identity and what makes a 'good Australian'.

But today I want to say that what makes a good Australian is not governed by the number of

generations you've been here. Two thousand generations, eight generations or one.

What makes a good Australian is not what god you worship, not where your ancestors come from, or how much money you have.

It is not your skin colour, your postcode, your occupation or your gender.

What makes a good Australian is what is in here, in your heart.

What makes a good Australian is are you a good neighbour?

Do you raise your family, do you pay your taxes, do you obey the law?

Good Australians are not just born, they can become good Australians by choice.

Good Australians are people who stand up for minorities, for the less powerful, for the fair go all round.

A good Australian is not dictated by skin colour or worship.

It is not dictated by what faith you adhere to.

It is whether or not you adhere to our laws and raise your family well.

A good Australian is the kindness you show in another's trouble and the courage you show in your own.

A good Australian is someone who adheres to our values - and our values include standing up for the less powerful.

Thank you very much.