

OPENING OF THE NEWCASTLE MIGRANT
RESOURCE CENTRE

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 1981

ADDRESS BY THE
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC AFFAIRS
THE HON IAN MACPHEE

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE THIS EVENING AND WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE INTERIM COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR INVITATION TO OPEN THIS CENTRE.

THE MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE IN NEWCASTLE IS ONE OF A CHAIN OF MORE THAN TWENTY CENTRES BEING ESTABLISHED UNDER THE GALBALLY REPORT AND OPERATING IN ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS CENTRE IS A RECOGNITION OF THE NEEDS OF THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE NEWCASTLE AREA.

I WOULD LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF THE ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION AND THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL, BOTH OF WHOM ARE REPRESENTED ON THE INTERIM COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT OF THE MRC, FOR THE WORK THEY HAVE BEEN DOING ON BEHALF OF MIGRANTS.

THE CENTRE WILL HAVE TWO MAIN FUNCTIONS:

- TO ASSIST MIGRANTS, PARTICULARLY NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES TO GAIN ACCESS TO EXISTING COMMUNITY SERVICES AND RESOURCES; AND

2.

- TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-HELP PROGRAMMES IN THE INTERESTS OF MIGRANT WELFARE AND SETTLEMENT.

WHILE THE COMMONWEALTH IS PROVIDING FUNDS FOR MRC'S AND THREE ARMS OF GOVERNMENT ARE REPRESENTED ON MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES, IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE LEADERSHIP AND DRIVE WILL MAINLY COME FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF ETHNIC AND COMMUNITY GROUPS.

THE CENTRE WILL OPERATE WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT CONTROL. IT WILL DETERMINE THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND SETS ITS OWN PRIORITIES; THE CLEAR MESSAGE OF THE GALBALLY REPORT WAS SELF-HELP AND THE SUCCESS OF THIS CENTRE WILL DEPEND ULTIMATELY ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE COMMUNITY PITCHES IN AND HELPS ITSELF.

MANY OF US WERE ONCE MIGRANTS OR THE CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS. THE PEOPLE WHO MOST NEED OUR HELP ARE NEW ARRIVALS, PARTICULARLY REFUGEES.

THE CITY OF NEWCASTLE WAS ONE OF THE EARLIEST PARTICIPANTS OUTSIDE THE CAPITALS TO TAKE PART IN COMMUNITY REFUGEE SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

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UNDER THE SCHEME, WHICH BEGAN IN LATE 1979, REFUGEES BYPASS MIGRANT HOSTELS AND MOVE DIRECTLY INTO THE COMMUNITY IN THE CARE OF GROUPS WHO UNDERTAKE A BROAD RANGE OF SUPPORT IN:-

- INITIAL ACCOMMODATION
- ASSISTANCE IN FINDING EMPLOYMENT
- ENGLISH LESSONS
- GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE COMMUNITY

SINCE 1979 ALMOST 1,700 REFUGEES HAVE BEEN SETTLED IN AUSTRALIA UNDER CRSS.

THE TARGET OF 2,000 APPROVALS FOR 1980/81 PROGRAM YEAR MAY EVEN BE SURPASSED.

I WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF TORONTO, WHICH UNDER FR. TONY STACE HAS SETTLED 5 VIETNAMESE FAMILIES.

I WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNISE ALSO THE EFFORTS OF THE RED CROSS WHICH PROVIDES SERVICES TO REFUGEES GENERALLY AND THOSE UNDER THE SCHEME.

THE ROLE OF THE POLISH ASSOCIATION OF MAITLAND IN THEIR EFFORT IN GENERATING COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR EAST EUROPEAN REFUGEES IS ALSO TO BE COMMENDED.

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DUE TO RECENT EVENTS IN EUROPE A GREATER NUMBER OF EAST
EUROPEAN REFUGEES, PARTICULARLY POLISH REFUGEES, ARE
APPLYING AND COMING TO AUSTRALIA.

WE DO TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF CARE IN SETTLING REFUGEES HERE IN
AUSTRALIA.

A CONSULTATIVE PROCESS DOES EXIST FOR EXAMPLE, BETWEEN THE
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND INTERESTED GROUPS
WHICH ALLOWS FOR SUCH FACTORS AS THE AVAILABILITY OF ACCOMMODATION
AND EMPLOYMENT TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE
ACCOMMODATION SHORTAGE IN THE HUNTER VALLEY AREA IS TAKEN INTO
ACCOUNT AND THE SHORTAGE OF SOME WORKERS PARTICULARLY IN HEAVY
INDUSTRY IN NEWCASTLE IS ALSO BEING CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING
REFUGEES FOR PLACEMENT IN AUSTRALIA AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL.

I WOULD LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PLAYING
A PART IN THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES AND COMMEND, IN
PARTICULAR TO COMMUNITY GROUPS, PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE
COMMUNITY REFUGEE SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

THE MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY
AS A CENTRE FOR ALL MIGRANTS, IN ALL ITS ENDEAVOURS. I TRUST
THAT IT WILL HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY.

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I NOW DECLARE THE CENTRE OPEN. TO MARK THE OCCASION I WOULD
LIKE TO PRESENT THE COMMITTEE WITH AN AUSTRALIAN FLAG, A
PORTRAIT OF THE QUEEN AND A CASSETTE OF THE NATIONAL
ANTHEM.