Excerpts from Hansard 1945 and 1946 – Menzies and Caldwell

If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific war now moving to a successful conclusion, it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendents unless we greatly increase our numbers. We are but 7 000 000 people and we hold 3 000 000 square miles of this earth’s surface ...

It would be prudent for us, therefore, not to ignore the possibility of a further formidable challenge within the next quarter of a century to our right to hold this land.

We may have only those next 25 years in which to make the best possible use of our second chance to survive. Our first requirement is additional population. We need it for reasons of defence and for the fullest expansion of our economy. We can increase our 7 000 000 by an increased birth rate and by a policy of planned immigration within the limits of our existing legislation.

Minister for Immigration Arthur Caldwell, 1945

As long as we are a population of only 7 000 000 ... it is absurd for us to pretend that we can describe ourselves as an independent power ... it is vital that our population shall be increased [through] ... substantial migration.

There is a second aspect. Our national independence turns not only upon this element but also upon the steady raising of our living standards – the standards of social benefits and security that can be given to our people ...

Either we shall place upon a static number of people in Australia a steadily increasing burden so as to maintain a rising level of social benefits, or we must get into this country from other parts of the world a few million people over some period of years, if we are to have the working, producing, contributing population that will be needed to sustain what everybody wants to see in the way of social betterment ...

Leader of the Opposition Robert Menzies, 1945
...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 program 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 ...

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 ... 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 migration 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 10 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, they must satisfy consular or passport officers and security service officers that they are people of good character before their passports are visaed for Australia ...

Minister for Immigration Arthur Caldwell, 1946