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ALL NATIONS CLUB, SYDNEY
STATEMENT, FEBRUARY 1984

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE ALL NATIONS CLUB

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The Hon Justice M D Kirby CMG
Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission

In September 1952 a great Commonwealth lawyer, Sir Robert Garran, put his signature to the subscription to the Memorandum of Association of the All Nations Club. Fellow subscribers included the former Justice A V Maxwell of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and Dr H C Coombs. In anticipation of the legal formalities — which always tend to take time and often come late and after the event — the Club had been opened on Anzac Day 1952. On that day, the flags of Australia and Turkey flew together with the novel, blue banner of the United Nations. Few would have predicted that the Anzac Day changes that have come upon the world and our country in the intervening three decades. The Australian flag is now being reconsidered in some quarters. The Turkish community in our country has grown apace. The high hopes we had in the United Nations have been diminished. But, for all that, it remains a vital institution for mankind in the age of nuclear weapons.

More important than institutional changes, are changes in the minds of men and women. The objectives that brought together a few post-War leaders of the Australian community in 1952 are now the bipartisan objectives of all major Australian political parties. In this sense, the original aim of Garran and his confederates in setting up the All Nations Club has been vindicated. The principle of multiculturalism, now officially adopted in Australia, reflects the aspirations of the Club. These include, not the mindless suppression of difference and individuality, of unfamiliar languages and unknown cultures into a second-rate Anglo-Celtic culture of Australia. Nowadays, we rejoice in our differences and in our right to differ within the Australian family.

This was the inspired original aim of the All Nations Club. It was almost revolutionary in 1952. It has been accepted by increasing numbers of the Australian community by 1984. The Club has contributed to this important change in the minds of our people. It continues to so contribute. And for this reason it has my warm support and approbation.