scanlon foundation

Citizenship
Discussion Paper

August 2015

Foreword

Understanding the factors that underpin social cohesion is crucial to maintaining a functional society and positive future outlook.

Since 2007, the Scanlon Foundation has supported Australia's largest study, monitoring the nation's attitudes on the issues influencing our cohesion.

The Mapping Social Cohesion research series – undertaken in collaboration with Monash University and in partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation – has captured the views of more than 24,000 people on topics from immigration, multiculturalism and trust in government, to discrimination and belonging.

It provides a solid foundation for analysis of key issues affecting our nation at government, business and community levels.

From this comprehensive research series, we know that overall, Australia remains a highly cohesive society by international standards. Yet, challenges in maintaining this and a successful immigration program remain.

This discussion paper builds on the National Mapping Social Cohesion research series and aims to inspire deeper consideration and discussion about some of its key themes. In particular, it draws a focus on citizenship, and how our idea of citizenship influences our sense of belonging and social participation.

This paper reflects on the notion of being a citizen in the genuine, rather than the technical sense – as a member of society including one's duties, obligations and functions.

It explores how relationships – economic, social, political and personal – are being transformed through the ubiquitous nature of social media and online connectivity, and questions the influence of multiple citizenships on the rise of the global citizen.

In an era of globalisation, the factors influencing our sense of national identity are certainly interesting topics worthy of broader, inclusive community discussion.

It is hoped that this discussion paper provides a basis for further thought and debate that may help to shape productive initiatives that contribute to maintaining and protecting social cohesion in Australia.

Anthea Hancocks

CEO, Scanlon Foundation

Introduction

Australia is proudly a diverse, multicultural society, and one that has experienced significant population growth in recent years. A large proportion – close to 60 per cent of that growth between 2000 and 2013 – can be attributed to immigration.

Since 2007, the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion report series has sought to understand the social impact of Australia's increasingly diverse immigration program, and maps this through the Scanlon-Monash Index.

The Index looks at five core indicators of social cohesion: belonging, worth, social justice, participation and acceptance and rejection.

Among the key topics explored through this is a detailed insight into our sense of national identity, pride and belonging.

The idea of citizenship is inextricably linked to these themes.

The Mapping Social Cohesion report series has shown that overall attitudes toward life in Australia remain positive. There is strong public identification with Australia – which is crucial for any cohesive society. However, our strong sense of belonging in Australia has trended down.

An analysis of surveys suggests that being a citizen has a positive effect on an individual's sense of belonging in Australia.

Building on the Mapping Social Cohesion report series, this paper seeks to explore the concept of citizenship, and how it is changing.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to draw attention to key factors that may impact on understandings of what it means to be a citizen – and to promote informed discussion of this issue.

Citizenship is more than a formal legal status. It is at least as much about behaviour and identity.

As individual members of society, we consider our behaviour in terms of the duties, obligations and functions of citizenship. As a community, we think about commitment to social values and national ideals.

This paper aims to encourage us to consider how we can foster a more inclusive, supportive society, and promote pride and sense of belonging across the community.

Citizenship

For the first half century of the Australian Federation, Australians were British citizens. It was not until the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 came into force on Australia Day in 1949 that people born in Australia gained legal status as Australian citizens.

Governments since the 1990s have devoted considerable attention to the importance of citizenship – encouraging foreign-born residents to formally embrace and commit to Australia, as they had in the immediate post-war years.

In 1993, the Citizenship Act was changed to recognise Australian citizenship as a common bond uniting all Australians, involving reciprocal rights and obligations. In the same year, a Pledge of Commitment was introduced to ensure that new citizens committed to the Australian nation and people.

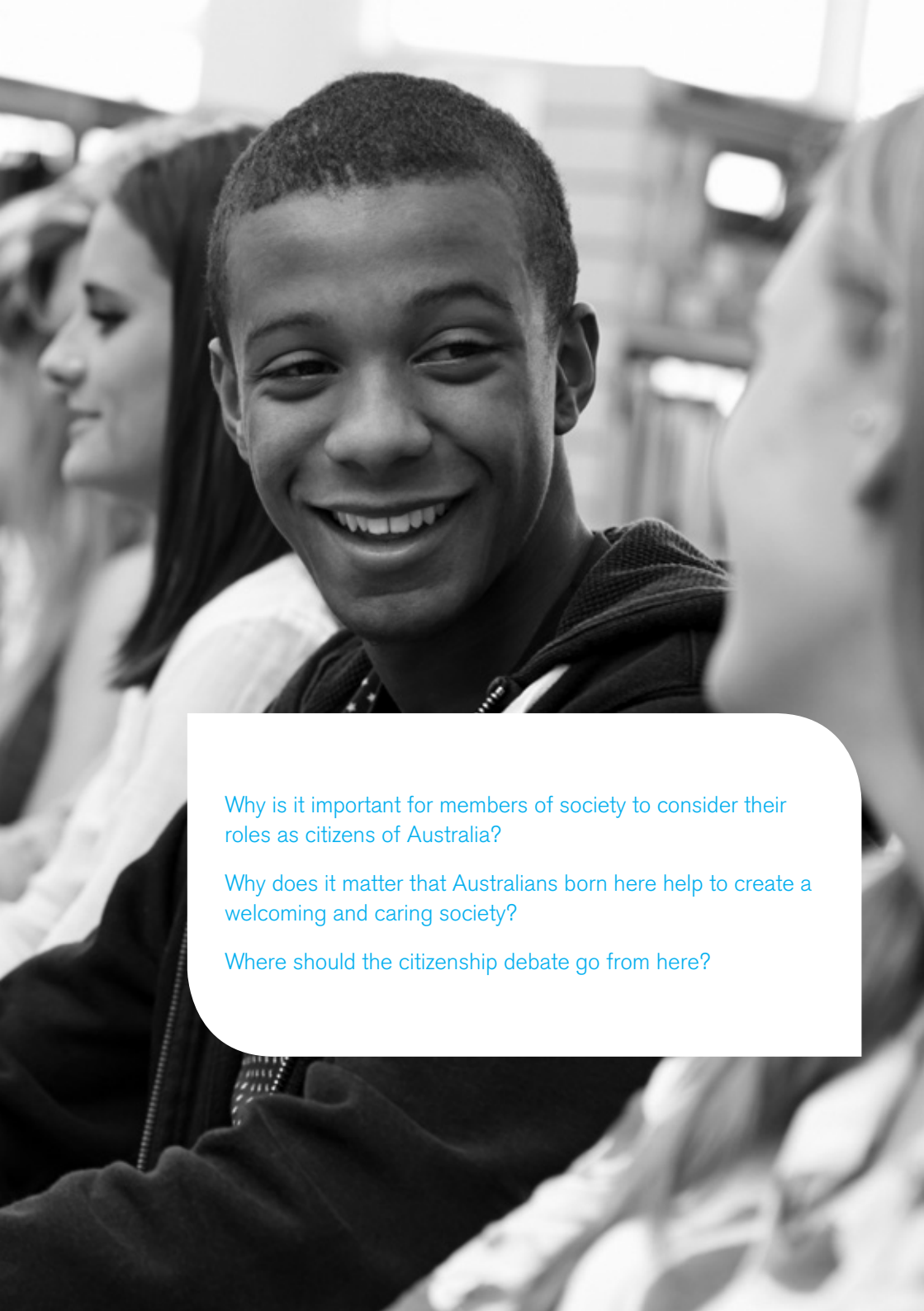
In 2001, Australian Citizenship Day was launched; it falls on 17 September each year.

In 2002, dual citizenship was established, allowing Australian citizens to hold citizenship of another country as well as their Australian citizenship.

In 2007, the Howard government introduced a citizenship test that applicants need to pass before being accepted as citizens. The test was also designed to ensure that applicants had a basic knowledge of the English language and of Australian history.

In 2015, discussion of citizenship gained national prominence when the Abbott Government set out to introduce legislation that would revoke the Australian citizenship of those who join or aid declared terrorist organisations. Currently under amended legislation, dual citizens would have their Australian citizenship revoked. The Government has left open the possibility that it could further legislate to strip Australians without another nationality of their citizenship if they take part in terrorism.

This new development has caused many to consider the importance of citizenship – and its revocation – for the maintenance and fostering of social cohesion.



Why is it important for members of society to consider their roles as citizens of Australia?

Why does it matter that Australians born here help to create a welcoming and caring society?

Where should the citizenship debate go from here?

Different ways to be a citizen

Identification with Australia

The Scanlon Foundation surveys – and other polling over the last 30 years – have consistently found that **the vast majority of Australians have a high level of identification with their country**, the fundamental prerequisite for any cohesive society. Almost unanimously, Australians express a sense of belonging (92% in 2014 and in 2013, 95% in 2012), indicate pride in the Australian way of life (88%) and believe that its maintenance is important (91%). There has, however, been a marked shift in the proportion indicating that they have a sense of belonging to 'a great extent', down from 74% in 2012 to 66% in 2014.

The online survey of third generation Australians provides further confirmation of very high levels of identification. It found that just 3% indicate that they do not feel that they belong in Australia; less than 3% disagree with the statements that 'I identify with Australians', 'I feel I am committed to Australia'; 4% disagree that 'I feel a bond with Australians'; 6% disagree that 'maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important'.

Source: Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2014, p. 2

In Australia's dynamic liberal democracy, it is possible to be an effective citizen without having gone through a formal Australian Citizenship application, ceremony and pledge. There is big "C" citizenship, the formal Citizenship process, and a small "c" citizenship, which relates to the responsibilities of Australians to each other, to their communities and to their nation.

Small "c" citizens are citizens because their residence in Australian society vests them with some or all the rights, privileges and duties of a citizen. They take responsibility for their own actions. They participate in the community.

They can join political parties, attend meetings, join and form social organisations, write letters to newspapers, call in to radio talkback shows, play sport, and attend public events.

Part of being a citizen in the substantive, rather than the technical sense, is having a willingness and desire to understand how Australia's legal and political systems work. Engagement depends on knowledge.

Governments in recent years have given more attention to the importance of civics education in the national curriculum. Remarkably, as recently as 2004, civics and citizenship was not a key learning area in any state or territory education system.

In 2009, education ministers agreed that civics should be taught in schools to reinforce understanding of the duties and benefits of citizenship. Progress has not been rapid. The shaping of the civics and citizenship curriculum for Years 3-10 began in 2011 and drafting started a year later. The final draft was circulated

Comparing 2012 and 2014, the proportion indicating having signed a petition was down from 54% to 48%; contact with a member of parliament, down from 27% to 23%; attendance at a protest, march or demonstration, down from 14% to 10%. Those indicating 'none of the above' for five forms of political participation increased from 6% to 12%.

The 2014 political participation index was the second lowest recorded, down from 106.6 in 2012 to 93.6 in 2014.

'Which, if any, of the following have you done over the last three years or so?', 2007-2014 (percentage)

Response	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Signed a petition	55.1	55.7	53.7	56.0	54.3*	44.9	47.9*
Written or spoken to a federal or state member of parliament	23.5	27.1	25.1	25.0	27.3*	23.4	23.0*
Joined a boycott of a product or company	12.4	13.9	13.5	17.9	14.5	12.6	13.1
Attended a protest, march or demonstration	12.7	12.8	9.4	11.3	13.7*	10.2	10.2*
N (unweighted)	2,012	2,019	2,021	2,001	2,000	1,200	1,526

*Change between 2012 and 2014 statistically significant at $p<05$.
Source: Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys 2014, p. 19

for comment in 2013 and by mid-2015 it was still awaiting endorsement by education ministers. The subject is taught in some states, but the results are uneven.

But effective citizenship extends far beyond a working knowledge of legal institutions and the Australian political system. A caring, welcoming society that is driven by a humanistic understanding fosters and encourages leaders across a range of activities – not just in politics but in the corporate, social, sporting and media worlds, as well as the professions and learning institutions.

What are the best ways in which Australians can extend knowledge and awareness of civic competence, especially among the young?

How can Australians across all parts of society be encouraged to find their voice and to use it?

The rise of global citizenship

Australia has experienced significant population growth in recent years. Since 2001, Australia's population has increased by close to 4 million, from 19.4 million to an estimated 23.3 million in December 2013. During 2012-13, the population increased by almost 400,000 people – close to 60% from net overseas migration.

We live in a new age of connection and movement. It is an age in which distance and even remoteness no longer hinders instantaneous communication. Borders are becoming harder to police as ever greater numbers of humans move between nations and continents, taking their ambitions and cultural ties with them.

At the same time, the world is experiencing a second industrial revolution due to new digital technologies. Relationships – economic, social, political and personal – are being transformed. It is a time of profound change.

This change produces deep and complex challenges for societies such as Australia's, which for most of its history has been characterised by the permanent settlement of immigrants.

But it is now possible for new arrivals to be here but not here.

Immigrant settlers can now, thanks to constantly evolving digital technologies and wireless communications, maintain real time connections to the social, cultural and political developments in their country of origin.

Phones, laptops, computers and satellite TV links can enable people to remain immersed in the lives of their families and communities 'back home'. The strength of this connection can be seen through the results of the 2013 Mapping Social Cohesion Recent Arrivals report, which showed that many new arrivals watch television or read online news from their former home countries every day or several times a week.

Contact with former home country 'every day' or 'several times a week', by country of birth, arrived 2000-2010 (percentage)

	Watch television on cable or satellite	Read newspapers on the internet	N (unweighted)
China + Hong Kong	**46.4**	**64.3**	177
India + Sri Lanka	**51.0**	**72.7**	184
Indonesia + Malaysia	29.4	**51.5**	237
South Africa + Zimbabwe	10.0	18.0	62
UK + Ireland	35.6	**53.3**	0
USA + Canada	26.8	46.4	2.3
New Zealand	18.6	43.8	165
Total	32.4	**54.0**	1,549

Source: Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation surveys Recent Arrivals Report, 2013, p. 36

Could these new forms of connectedness come at the cost of full involvement in Australian society, diminishing capacity to engage in current issues and debates – issues that could affect their lives?

The rise of the internet, the decisive technology of our time, is also affecting commerce, allowing for much higher flows of capital between societies. The internet encourages the internationalisation of commercial transactions, not just between financial institutions or between businesses but also for consumers.

The tyranny of distance having been, in some important respects, overcome, what might this mean for Australian society?

As relationships within the country change, there is potential for people's relationship to the country to also change. In this new environment, what could 'belonging' come to mean? And, what impact might it have on the value and practice of citizenship in Australia?

It is not just technology that is driving the changes.

Fundamental political and economic shifts in the world's most populous nations, China and India, have generated rapid growth, higher levels of affluence and expanding middle classes. In turn, this has opened the way for vastly greater numbers of Chinese and Indians to move to Australia either to work or to study in recent years.

The gradual deregulation of trade, the shift of global manufacturing to lower-cost developing countries, the issuing of far greater numbers of temporary visas by Australia, and the boom in the sale of Australian education services are also shaping this new environment.

What we appear to be seeing is the emergence of a new phenomenon: the global citizen – the individual who moves to a new country but does not seek citizenship.

The global citizen could claim a new identity which is an amalgam of the old and the new country, or retain an almost-full sense of identity with the old country.

This can have profound implications for Australia's social and political cohesion. But accepting the concept of dual, multiple and global citizenship is important, as young people overseas and in Australia see their opportunities for employment beyond their countries of birth.

How do we develop an 'educated, intelligent and innovative alumni' that are keen to return to Australia if they do travel overseas?

How do we adjust to the global marketplace for talent, and build a creative and innovative approach to business that will foster a new generation of young people that sees Australia as welcoming, caring and providing them with a future they want to be a part of?

Could a broader understanding of citizenship influence some foreign-born Australians to reassess, either positively or negatively, the personal value, the rights and the obligations, of taking out Australian citizenship?

Losing a sense of belonging

The Scanlon Foundation has been conducting its Mapping Social Cohesion national surveys since 2007, measuring the ebbs and flows of public attitudes within Australian society. In that time, a series of underlying problems have become apparent. The surveys suggest a substantial level of dissatisfaction with the political system and low levels of respect for politicians, political parties and parliament.

Another concerning trend in recent surveys has been the increase in the reported experience of discrimination because of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion. In 2007, nine per cent reported discrimination. In 2014, the number had doubled to 18 per cent. Of those who reported discrimination, almost three out of ten indicated that they experienced it at least once a month.

Given these findings, it should not surprise that throughout the seven Mapping Social Cohesion surveys, the respondents' sense of belonging in Australia has trended down. In 2007, 77 per cent reported belonging to a great extent. In 2014, that proportion was 66 per cent.

This is where citizenship has an impact. An analysis of all Scanlon Foundation surveys from 2007 to 2014 suggests that being a citizen has a positive effect on an individual's sense of belonging in Australia. Among respondents aged 25-44 and born in Australia, 77 per cent reported a great sense of belonging. Among those aged 25-44 who were born overseas, the results were significantly different: 56 per cent of those who had become Australian citizens said they belonged to a great extent, compared to only 32 per cent of those who were not citizens.

To what extent do you have a sense of belonging in Australia? Respondents aged 25-44 (percentage)

	Born in Australia	Born overseas	
		Australian citizen	Not Australian citizen
To a great extent	76.7	56.3	31.9
N (unweighted)	2,708	585	346

Source: Scanlon Foundation national surveys, aggregated data, 2007-2014

Nationalism and patriotism

The Australian flag is frequently in use. Politicians deploy it when they make announcements. Flags are abundant on Australia Day, much more so than in past decades. They are often attached to cars in late January, around the time of the holiday. For much of the twentieth century, the Australia Day holiday has been a festival of citizenship ceremonies and backyard barbecues. The announcement of the Australian of the Year is also a much bigger media event than in past years.

At the same time, Anzac Day has become a moment of much greater reflection and commemoration in the past 20 years, after several decades of being one of the less celebrated public holidays. For many thousands of young Australians, attendance at the dawn service at Gallipoli and at war memorials in Australia has become a rite of passage. Clearly, there is a hunger among many contemporary Australians to express their pride and appreciation of the nation's past and its achievements.

There is a chance that what could be lost amid these expressions of loyalty to historical events and symbols, is the acknowledgement that being a citizen of Australia is not necessarily defined by the waving of our flag, marching in a parade or holding a barbecue, but by our behaviours to each other and our ability to recognise the worth of our fellow Australians, irrespective of background.

New arrivals have chosen to come here for all that Australia has to offer – from education to economic and physical security – and are keen to contribute to the future development of their new country. Their ability to do this is directly affected by the degree of acceptance that they experience through welcoming communities, caring neighbours and social inclusiveness.

Many Australians are fearful of external threats and this has led some to a false belief that the formal citizenship process is a protection against violent extremism. But limiting attention to this type of formality ignores the more important, very positive contribution, that a broader appreciation of everyone's responsibilities to being a good and active citizen can make towards a better-functioning, more cohesive Australia.

Will the introduction of more stringent citizenship requirements, such as tests and pledges of commitment to Australia, foster heightened xenophobia based on the assumption that new arrivals are a threat to our values?

What are the unintended consequences for new migrants of greater demands for demonstrating commitment to their new country?

The temporary Australian

One of the biggest and most far-reaching changes in Australian society over the last two decades is the steady growth of a large cohort of temporary residents and the country's economic reliance on this growing segment of the population.

Australia's population in mid-2015 was estimated at 23.8 million and at any given time somewhere around one million people in the country are temporary migrants. This change has taken place during a relatively short period, since the mid 1990s.

This cohort of temporary residents is made up chiefly of international students, migrant workers who are here on temporary visas, and tourists on working holidays. There are also many New Zealand citizens who enter on visas entitling them to indefinite residence, without granting permanency. The bulk of these temporary residents live in Sydney and Melbourne.

Their numbers are large and have risen steeply. For example, in 2001 there were just 32,000 people on 457 visas – which cover skilled workers from overseas who have been sponsored and nominated by an employer. The number of 457 visas increased from 160,420 in 2012 to 201,560 in early 2014, according to the Department of Immigration and Border Control. This now represents approximately 1.6 per cent of the workforce.

There was a similar dramatic rise in the number of foreign students studying in Australia. In March 2014, government figures show that there were 366,910 on student visas and 25,110 on temporary graduate visas. This increase in overseas students represents almost a doubling of numbers since 2006, when the total was 207,820.

Another large segment of the temporary cohort is made up of New Zealanders. Since the 1920s, there have been special arrangements between Australia and New Zealand, which have allowed for the free flow of people between the countries.

Under the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, which was introduced in 1973, Australia reached an agreement with New Zealand that is unique to the two countries. Under this agreement, Australians and New Zealanders can work, live and visit each other's country indefinitely. They do not need to seek prior authority. There is no cap on the number of New Zealand citizens who can enter Australia.

For the past 50 years, the number of New Zealanders coming to Australia has been on the rise, leading to substantial communities on the eastern seaboard.

Although New Zealanders can live and work in Australia, there are drawbacks. They are given a visa that is classed as temporary and because of a change in the Australian law in 2001, New Zealand citizens who have arrived since are denied many welfare benefits under Australia's social security system.

The population of New Zealanders in Australia is substantial, but gaining Australian citizenship is not an easy process for the large majority who came on the basis of New Zealand citizenship – largely due to cost and difficulty to qualify. In March 2014 it was estimated there were 644,890 New Zealand citizens in Australia, according to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. And yet, in 2013-14, only 5,361 from New Zealand took out Australian citizenship. This makes New Zealanders the largest group of residents in Australia without a realistically attainable path to citizenship.

Is there value in the Australian Government rethinking its approach to the status and entitlements of New Zealanders who have successfully integrated into the Australian community?

What are the social and economic impacts of increasing the number of temporary visas and their pathway (or thereof) to permanent citizenship?

Is there a need to look at cultural perspectives on being a good citizen and whether a formal Citizenship process makes a difference to behaviours and attitudes?

Should Australia expect all of its settlers to become Australian citizens?

The changing public space

Thanks to the digital revolution, the only certainty is that the ways in which commerce, manufacturing, education and communications are conducted will continue to change. The pace of that change is also likely to increase.

The changes in the past 20 years have been rapid beyond imagination. Who could have conceived that we now carry mobile phones that are also video and still cameras, mail services, news outlets, maps and personal libraries?

It's only a little over 30 years ago that the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) was set up in Australia to provide Australians from other countries news and entertainment from their countries of origin along with all other forms of mainstream media.

This raises questions about how in the future we will discuss and settle issues of citizenship.

How will the greater flow of temporary settlers change the Australian community's sense of itself and the range of obligations and emotional connections Australians feel towards each other and their status as citizens? The shift from a traditional permanent settler society to a society with historically high numbers of temporary workers, backpackers, students, dual-citizens and long-stay residents who choose not to take up citizenship is not yet pervasive, but it is definitely a change worth noting and contemplating.

Citizenship, as practised in all its forms within Australia, should be about inclusion. But as our society evolves along with geopolitical and economic changes, technological advances and the human responses to those developments, the ways in which Australia and Australians promote, perceive and exercise citizenship will demand, and deserve, constant, candid re-evaluation.

Contact

Anthea Hancocks
CEO, Scanlon Foundation

foundation@scanlonfoundation.org.au

03 9629 1490

scanlonfoundation.org.au

@Scanlon_Fdn