



Australian Citizenship Test Review Committee

Recommendations and Government responses

1. The objectives of a citizenship test be to determine if a person has satisfied the legislative requirements for becoming a citizen under the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 and to demonstrate to the general public that people applying for citizenship have satisfied the legislative requirements when making the Pledge of Commitment.

Supported. This will more clearly link the test to the legal requirements for citizenship.

2. The objectives of a citizenship test be included and made transparent in any promotional material associated with a citizenship test.

Supported.

3. The legislative requirement for citizenship applicants “to possess a basic knowledge of the English language” be understood as having “a sufficient knowledge of English to be able to exist independently in the wider Australian community”, and this definition should be in the Australian Citizenship Instructions (ACIs).

Supported. The Government remains committed to the requirement for prospective citizens to possess a basic knowledge of English and agrees with the Committee’s definition.

4. The definition of a “basic knowledge of the English language”, as understood in the ACIs, should guide the development of resources to support prospective citizens prepare for the citizenship test.

Supported.

5. The legislative requirement to have an “adequate knowledge of Australia and of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship” be linked to concepts and information people need to understand in order to make the Pledge of Commitment (as detailed in paragraph 6.4) and this understanding be stated in the ACIs.

Supported. The Government strongly supports the Pledge being the centrepiece of Australian citizenship testing. The Pledge is about our democratic beliefs, our laws and the rights, responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship. Understanding civic responsibilities and the meaning of citizenship is of fundamental importance to all Australians and is a critical factor in nation-building in our culturally diverse society. It is crucial that prospective citizens understand these concepts. The new test will focus on these rather than being a general knowledge quiz about Australia.

6. All of the information required to meet the legislative requirement to have “an adequate knowledge of Australia and of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship” be contained in one resource book.

Supported.

7. Broader information on Australia which may be of interest to prospective citizens should continue to be made available as part of the resource book but should not be tested.

Supported. The focus of the new test will be on the Pledge of Commitment that people make when becoming citizens. However, it is also important to provide prospective citizens with broader information on Australia including Australia's history and notable Australians.

8. The revised resource book be developed in two separate sections – testable and non-testable information.

Supported. This will ensure that the resource book is more clearly structured and that information required to pass the test is clearly defined.

9. The resource book be rewritten and/or edited by professional educators with experience in civics and citizenship education.

Supported.

10. The Government commit to reviewing the content of the book at regular intervals given the evolving nature of Australian society.

Supported.

11. There should be no mandatory questions in the revised test.

Supported. The revised test will not contain any mandatory questions as all testable information is of equal importance and all new test questions will have equal weighting.

12. The required pass mark for the citizenship test remain at 60 per cent.

Not Supported. The Government will raise the pass mark to 75 per cent to maintain the rigour of the test. The new pass mark will ensure new citizens have an adequate knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship as well as an adequate knowledge of Australia.

13. The range of Government-funded pathways to citizenship set out in *Table 1 – Pathways to Citizenship*, be provided to assist and support individuals to prepare to become Australian citizens.

Supported 13(2a) and (2b). These alternative pathways to citizenship will assist disadvantaged and vulnerable migrants and refugees, including those who understand English but whose level of literacy does not allow them to undertake a formal computer-based test.

Not Supported 13(2c). The Government is committed to having the test in English.

14. Each citizenship pathway be firmly aligned to the proposed method of testing.

Supported.

15. The testing and assessment framework be developed by educational testing professionals to ensure consistency across all pathways, and that it be drawn from, and coordinated with, the development of new (both basic English and other language) educational resources.

Supported.

16. Testing methods include a range of formats including computer-based, oral and paper-based tests, and competency based assessment.

Supported. A range of testing methods will cater for the needs of a broad range of people, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable.

17. Preparatory material be available in English and community languages and provided in a range of multimedia formats including audio, visual and written.

Supported. A range of preparatory material will enable self-directed learning and assist a broad range of clients including the hearing or visually impaired.

18.(a) All citizenship test questions, regardless of the pathway, be made publicly available; and
(b) educational experts be consulted on the number of questions to be in the bank.

Not Supported 18(a). Maintaining the confidentiality of the test questions will ensure the rigour of the test is not diminished.

Supported 18(b). Educational experts will ensure questions in the test are focused on testable information contained in the resource book.

19. Section 21(3)(d) of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* be amended in the spirit of the Act to include an inability to demonstrate a basic knowledge of English and an adequate knowledge of Australia and of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship due to mental incapacity, resulting in those individuals not being required to sit a test.

Supported. This change will ensure that the test does not disadvantage vulnerable people who most need our support.

20. A concept of “earned” citizenship be introduced as outlined in *Table 2 - Earned Citizenship*.

Not Supported. The Government believes this would introduce classes of citizenship.

21. Earned citizenship be decided by a Citizenship Referee, delegated that responsibility by the Minister, to determine according to transparent criteria whether a person is eligible for citizenship by virtue of having satisfied the earned citizenship pathway.

Not Supported.

22. The regional testing network be expanded and consideration be given to involving organisations which have a broad reach into regional and remote Australia.

Supported. The Government has asked DIAC to consider a cost-effective and sustainable model for ensuring clients in regional and remote Australia have reasonable access to citizenship testing.

23. Citizenship testing continue in Australian missions overseas and where there is no Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) officer available, this be undertaken by an Australian-based Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) consular official.

Supported in-principle.

24. An individual be required to be residentially eligible to sit a formal test.

Supported.

25. Processes be streamlined and realigned to combine citizenship testing with the citizenship application.

Supported.

26. DIAC develops and implements a coordinated information campaign to provide accurate information to prospective citizens to assist them through the citizenship testing and application process.

Supported.

27. DIAC substantially strengthens its efforts in promoting the acquisition of citizenship by long-term eligible permanent residents.

Supported in-principle.

28. The Australian Government endorse that knowledge of Australian citizenship and civic responsibilities is important for all Australians no matter how they became citizens.

Supported.

29. A nationally consistent education program on civics and citizenship should be implemented in all schools commencing at primary level.

Supported in-principle noting that work in this area is underway.

30. DIAC leads a whole-of-Government approach to the promotion of civics and citizenship in the general community.

Supported in-principle.

31. A citizenship convention be held in 2009 to mark the 60th anniversary of the enactment of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*.

Not Supported. A range of activities to celebrate the anniversary are already planned.

32. Until this report is implemented, the complete bank of current test questions should be published as soon as practicable.

Not Supported. The Government is committed to maintaining the current test in its present form until the new test is in place.

33. Until this report is implemented, the number of correctly answered mandatory questions should be reduced from three to two.

Not Supported. The Government is committed to maintaining the current test in its present form until the new test is in place.

34. Citizenship test administrators be kept up-to-date with new Minister's determinations and changes to the ACIs through regular training, and through staff messages and staff meetings.

Supported.