

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR TASMANIA, AT THE UNVEILING OF STONES
PLACED IN THE INTERNATIONAL WALL OF FRIENDSHIP BY
THE COMMUNITIES NOW LIVING IN TASMANIA THAT HAVE
COME FROM EAST TIMOR, SIERRA LEONE AND ZIMBABWE,
SUNDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2013**

As Patron of the International Wall of Friendship, it is both an honour and a privilege to have again been invited to an unveiling ceremony, this time to add three plaques - one each from the communities who have come from East Timor, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. The International Wall of Friendship was built to bring all of Tasmania's communities closer together and to provide a tribute to the contribution that migrant communities have made to the development of the State.

“Immigration has been integral to the development of Australia’s population, economy and society. Today, Australia, with a population of 21.5 million, is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world.” ... For the past 20 years, successive Australian governments have recognised the benefits of tapping the education, language and cultural skills and knowledge of migrants.”¹

According to the first Assistant Secretary, Migration and Visa Policy Division of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship “Australians today are more likely than ever to have been born overseas and speak a language other than English at home. Nearly half of our population was either born overseas or have at least one overseas-born parent. Since the department’s inception in 1945, more than seven million migrants have settled in Australia. Their contribution to the

¹“The Economic and Social Contribution of Migrants to Western Australia” (2012) http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/resources/publications/localgovernment/Economic_Social_Contributions_MigrantsWA_Full_Report.pdf; accessed 29th October 2013

process of nation-building has been immeasurable, and we should have no doubts that continued migration will play just as important a role in Australia's future social and economic wellbeing."²

I am one of those seven million migrants that have settled in this country since 1945, for I came from the United Kingdom with my family in 1950, just five years after the end of World War II. A recent Australian Government Report,³ "Migrant Economic Outcomes & Contributions" stated that "most new migrants provide a substantial positive contribution to the Budget and this contribution grows over time,"⁴ and that that contribution is highest in the skilled migration streams". The same report states that unemployment is low amongst skilled migration streams and participation in the workforce is high. My wife, whose parents also migrated from the United Kingdom with their young family, is fond of saying that it takes initiative, energy, courage and hard work to migrate from one country to another, regardless of the circumstances that motivate the migration, and those attributes stand migrants in good stead and equip them to make a contribution when they arrive in their new country and I agree with her about that.

But migration is not just about contributions to the budget. Migrants bring new cultures, art and music to Australia; cultures art and music, or aspects of them, that are gradually stirred into a giant melting pot that is brewing what one day we will call the 'Australian culture' - something that is presently still in its evolutionary stage.

² http://www.immi.gov.au/about/speeches-pres/_pdf/2011/2011-09-14-ceda-speech.pdf accessed 29th October 2013.

³ April 2011: http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/_pdf/outcomes-contributions-apr11.pdf. Accessed 29th October 2013

⁴ Supra at page 3.

The Wall of Friendship recognises the contributions that migrant communities make to the culture and wealth of their new country and symbolises the welcome that we all extend to those communities.

So, we welcome first, the people from Sierra Leone. This is a country with a war torn and troubled history. Sierra Leone's achievement of independence in 1961 marked the start of a long period of internal strife marked by coups and military dictatorships. The conflicts did not end until 2002 when the United Nations installed a peace keeping force. The first batch of refugees from Sierra Leone arrived in Tasmania in early 2001. The country's plaque was installed in the presence of the country's Tasmanian Patron, Senator Lisa Singh on 27th April this year, being the fifty-second anniversary of the day Sierra Leone gained independence from Great Britain. Today, the members of the Sierra Leone community who call Tasmania home see their plaque officially unveiled.

Next, we welcome the people from East Timor and especially today - to this ceremony - we welcome the East Timorese Ambassador to Australia, Mr Abel Guterres. The people of East Timor have had a long struggle for freedom and independence. It has been a struggle that has cost the country dearly but today the future for the East Timorese looks good. Although the East Timorese community in Tasmania is quite small, there are a number of students from East Timor here doing a Master or PhD programme at the University and, as is well known, there is a larger community of eye care professionals - doctors, nurses, optometrists and volunteers who are committed to the East Timor Eye Project which is coordinated by Dr. Nitin Verma and which has now

been running for thirteen years. The East Timorese community is welcome in the Tasmania.

Last, we welcome the people from Zimbabwe. There are currently approximately 80 Zimbabweans in 25 families living in Tasmania. Some came to Tasmania as early as the 1980's as scholarship students. The field of studies were medicine, mining and engineering and many of these students stayed on in Tasmania and are now productive members of the community working in the medical health sector, the mining industry, Hydro Tasmania and Forestry.

Zimbabweans, along with immigrants from other parts of Africa, have introduced Australians to exciting new cultures, music, cooking and dancing that will surely make its mark in that giant melting pot that is slowly shaping the Australian culture of the future. I welcome all those people who were born in Zimbabwe and who are now living in Tasmania.