



**APOLOGY TO THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA
ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIANS OF ARABIC BACKGROUND**

Offered on 13 June 1998

On behalf of the many Australians of Arab background who wish to do so, and we know they are many; we would like to offer our apology, and express our sorrow, to the Aboriginal people of Australia.

In Arabic there is a difference between two words that express being sorry; to offer an *l'tizar* means to apologise to someone for a wrong doing that one has actually committed against them. To offer one's *'Asaf'* on the other hand, means to express sorrow, or better still, solidarity, with someone because of a mishap that has affected them. Australians of Arab background on behalf of whom we speak, would like to say sorry in both senses of the term. They wish to express their sorrow and their solidarity with the Aboriginal people over the many past injustice they have had to endure even when there were hardly any Arabs in Australia. But they also wish to apologise for what they see as their own contribution in perpetrating this injustice. Above all, they wish to apologise for ignoring the presence of the Aboriginal people and their wishes when migrating to Australia. To put it plainly, we are sorry for having come to this country without asking you, the traditional owners of this land, first. We come from a culture that values honourable behaviour to the highest degree, and we feel that our presence in Australia cannot be honourable without this genuinely felt apology.

We would like to give more substance to this apology by committing ourselves to lobby the Australian government so that an acknowledgment of the Aboriginal people becomes part of the citizenship oath. This way, all new Australian citizens will be invited to become conscious, from the start they are becoming citizens of a land which was previously owned by the Aboriginal people, with all the responsibilities towards mending the injuries of the past that such a citizenship entails.