

Citizenship pledges and national values: narrating and racializing Australian citizenship status

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Abstract

The ‘pledge of commitment’ is a central element of Australian citizenship. This paper explores how the performance of the pledge narrates the citizen subject. It argues that the citizen subject is narrated as embodying three national values: loyalty, unity and social cohesion. This paper then argues that these values are racially coded. Narrating Australian citizenship in this way creates a more precarious form of citizenship for migrants generally, and Muslims in particular. The paper concludes by encouraging legal scholars to be more critical of citizenship law, paying particular attention to the narration of the citizen subject at ceremonial occasions.

Key words: Citizenship Law, Narration, Citizenship Pledge, Cultural difference, National Values.

1. Introduction

Ceremonies are events where the law is performed. Indeed, performance is essential to the meaning and operation of law. Peters writes that ‘Law unfolds in rites and ceremonies, orchestrations, liturgies, images, staging itself for the spectators of the state’ (Peters 2008: 189). Performance makes the authority of law visible. In Peters’ words, ‘[p]erformance is law’s tool, assisting law in its work of subjecting us to its authoritarian commands’ (Ivi: 190). For example, Peters argues that the origins and legitimacy of the law are performed through the trial.

Legal ceremonies also narrate individuals as both legal subjects and members of a culture (Althusser 2014; Manderson and Turner 2006; Umphrey 2011; Chase 2006). Chase explores how dispute processes draw on ceremonies and rituals to narrate social identities and express the ‘longings and passions’ that are central to a particular culture (Chase 2006: 4). Chase argues that ceremonies and rituals of law ‘symbolize the location of authority’ and capture ‘how individuals conceptualise their relationship to authority’ (Chase 2006:

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4-5). Ceremonies narrate legal subjects not only by telling stories about existing identities, but also by creating those identities (Ewick and Silbey 1995: 202). Narrated identities draw upon and reinforce the social power structures of the story teller (Ewick and Silbey 2003: 1332).

This paper critically analyses the performance of the 'pledge of commitment' during Australian citizenship ceremonies. I argue that the pledge narrates the Australian citizen as embodying three national values; loyalty, unity and social cohesion. Although the government asserts that these three national values are culturally inclusive, this paper argues otherwise. Analysing the performance of the pledge in its social and political context, the pledge reinforces suspicion about migrants generally, and Muslims in particular. The aim of this paper is to expose the racially and culturally discriminatory national values that have become associated with Australian citizenship.

The argument proceeds in three parts. First, the paper outlines the content of the pledge, as well as how and where the pledge is performed.

Second, the paper analyses what the performance of the pledge communicates about citizenship as a legal status. I argue that in performing the pledge, candidates for Australian citizenship (conferees) enact three national values: loyalty, unity, and social cohesion. This narration occurs not only through the content of words used in the pledge, but also in the way that the pledge is performed. This paper explores how government officials constrain the voice and actions of conferees during the ceremony to ensure that these national values are the focus.

Third, this paper argues that these three national values are racially coded. In Australia, the pledge of commitment is only made at citizenship ceremonies, and only migrants are required to attend citizenship ceremonies. The targeted nature of these ceremonies interpellates migrants as both the same as, but also different from, Australians who acquire citizenship in other ways. While the pledge is an opportunity for migrants to demonstrate that they are Australian because they embody these national values, the pledge also signals that migrants are different as they are the only individuals required to do so. Australians who are citizens by birth, descent, adoption or resumption are not required to make the pledge. This targeted treatment narrates migrants, and particularly Muslims, as individuals whose cultural and religious differences are incompatible with these national values. The implication is that even after Muslims and other migrants make the pledge, demonstrate these values and are conferred citizenship status, suspicion about their commitment to these national values lingers. This suspicion legitimises an escalation of surveillance and public scrutiny. The citizenship pledge, and the citizen subject that it narrates, creates different classes of Australian citizens. Migrants, and indeed any person who is perceived to belong elsewhere, are interpellated in ways which render their claim to citizenship status conditional and precarious.

It is timely to examine how Australian citizenship is narrated. The Australian government is increasingly restricting access to citizenship. Racialised meanings of citizenship conveyed through official ceremonies can also embolden suspicion about cultural difference, reinforce negative stereotypes, and fuel hostility amongst citizens. It is therefore important to expose the racially exclusionary national values embedded in citizenship, a legal status generally considered to promote cultural inclusion and equality.

2. Australian citizenship and the pledge of commitment

First, this section briefly introduces the Australian citizenship pledge of commitment. As pledges are only performed at citizenship ceremonies in Australia, the ceremonial context is also outlined.

The Australian government states that ceremonies ‘should be formal and meaningful occasions conducted with dignity, respect and ceremony’ (Citizenship Ceremonies Code 2019: 9). Ceremonies ‘should be designed to impress upon conferees the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship’ and ‘the significance of the occasion’ (Ibid).

To ensure that the ceremony is formal and meaningful, the government tightly prescribes what is required before, during and after the ceremony. The rules that outline the exact manner in which the citizenship ceremony is to proceed are currently set out in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (Cth) (hereafter ‘the Act’), the *Australian Citizenship Regulations 2016* (Cth) (the ‘Regulations’), and the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code (the ‘Code’). While the Act and the Regulations outline some elements of the pledge, the Code goes into the greatest detail about how state officials should conduct the citizenship ceremony. The Code, however, does not have the status of law and so it provides guidelines which are not legally enforceable.

Citizenship ceremonies in Australia are usually organized by Local Councils, and until recently due to COVID 19, conducted at least every 2-3 months (Ivi: 8, 19). Except when there are less than 20 conferees applying for citizenship in that area, every Local Council must hold ceremonies on days of national significance such as Australia Day (26 January) and Citizenship Day (17 September) (Ivi: 20). Local Councils nominate a ‘Presiding Officer’ to conduct the citizenship ceremony (Ivi: 6, 12). The Presiding Officer must be an Australian citizen who has been approved by the Australian government (Ivi: 6, 12, Australian Government 2019a). Some individuals have standing authorization as Presiding Officers, such as federally elected Members of Parliament and Mayors of Local Councils.¹ Representatives of all three levels of Australian government (Federal, State or Territory, and Local) must be invited to the ceremony (Ivi: 13). Other individuals may be given official invitations, for instance community leaders, representatives of community organisations, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait elders or leaders (Ibid). The pledge, in all but the most unusual circumstances, must be held in ceremonies conducted within Australia and ‘in public’ (Ivi: 8, 10, 17, 22).² The public nature of the ceremony means that citizenship ceremonies are conducted in halls, parks, government offices or community venues, rather than in churches, commercialised spaces, homes or even courtrooms.

During the ceremony, the Presiding Officer usually stands in front of the gathering, with the conferees seated opposite. Invited guests, such as friends and family, are seated behind the conferees (Ivi: 25). The Presiding Officer starts with a welcome (Ivi: 32), which may include an acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples as Australia’s first peoples or a welcome to country by an Indigenous elder (Ivi: 27, 32). The Presiding Officer may then give an opening address (Ivi: 32). If the Minister is not present at the ceremony, the Presiding Officer must read the Minister’s welcome message (Ivi: 12, 32, 36). Updated from time to time, the current wording of the Minister’s message broadly acknowledges the contributions that migrants have made to the Australian nation. The message also repeats

¹ Australian Citizenship LIN 19/066 (Persons who may receive a Pledge of Commitment) Instrument 2019.

² *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (Cth) section 27, *Australian Citizenship Regulations 2016* (Cth) section 10

the values that individuals need to commit to and defend if they wish to become Australian citizens. Those values are freedom, the rule of law, and democracy. The message also states that Australian citizens believe that ‘all people are equal, regardless of their cultural background, gender, race or religion.’³

After reading the Minister’s welcome message, the Presiding Officer may then give their own speech, and may also invite official guests to make a speech (Ivi: 32, 36). The Code suggests that speeches ought to be ‘brief and appropriate’ (Ivi: 37). The Code gives further guidance about what is appropriate. Specifically, the speeches of official guests must avoid issues that may be contentious from a ‘political, racial or sectarian point of view’ (Ivi: 36, 37). The Code suggests that speeches may note the contributions that new citizens make to Australia, or the benefits of citizenship (Ivi: 37).

After the speeches, the Presiding officer must read aloud the preamble of the Act to the conferees (Ivi: 38). The preamble reads as follows;

The Parliament recognises that Australian citizenship represents full and formal membership of the community of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Australian citizenship is a common bond, involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians, while respecting their diversity.
The Parliament recognises that persons conferred Australian citizenship enjoy these rights and undertake to accept these obligations:
(a) by pledging loyalty to Australia and its people; and
(b) by sharing their democratic beliefs; and
(c) by respecting their rights and liberties; and
(d) by upholding and obeying the laws of Australia.⁴

The conferees are then invited to stand and make the pledge of commitment (Ivi: 32, 38). The wording of the pledge of commitment mirrors the preamble and is prescribed in the Act. There are two forms of the pledge, one version of made ‘under God’, the other version with references to God omitted. The words of the pledge are;

From this time forward, [under God],
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect, and
whose laws I will uphold and obey.⁵

To administer the pledge, the Presiding Officer reads aloud each line, and requests that the conferees repeat back that line together, before reading out the next line (Ivi: 7). Making the pledge is the last step before conferees are granted the legal status of citizenship (Ivi: 8). The Presiding Officer must verify that each conferee has repeated the pledge (Ivi: 12, 38-39).

After making the pledge, some ceremonies hold an additional affirmation ceremony. If an affirmation is part of the citizenship ceremony, then the words of the pledge are repeated aloud a third time (Ivi: 41). During the affirmation, both the new citizens

³ Available on the Department of Home Affairs website. At the time of writing, the current Minister’s message can be found here: <<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/citizenship-subsite/files/minister-coleman-ministers-message.pdf>>. Last accessed 28 November 2020.

⁴ *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (Cth) preamble and schedule 1.

⁵ *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (Cth), Sch 1.

and everyone present is invited to stand and repeat the pledge together. As before, the Presiding Officer reads out a line, and the audience repeats back that line, before the Presiding Officer moves onto the next line. The Presiding Officer then makes a closing address (Ivi: 32). Often, the citizenship certificates are signed by the Presiding Officer and distributed to the new citizens that same day (Ivi: 39). Sometimes refreshments follow, and new citizens may be given a gift (Ivi: 26). The government suggests that if a gift is given, then a professional photo of the occasion would be appropriate (Ivi: 26, 31).

The Code also provides guidance on how to conduct the ceremony, including suggestions about the visual and physical aspects. The Code requires that certain symbols such as the Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag, and the Torres Strait Islander flag ought to be displayed (Ivi: 24-25). An official portrait of the Queen and the Coat of Arms must also be visible, and the national anthem should be played or sung (Ibid). Commercial advertising, political material and religious symbols are not permitted to be distributed. Neither can such material be incidentally displayed in a manner that the participants might perceive the material to have government endorsement (Ivi: 26). Whenever possible, the organisers of a citizenship ceremony are encouraged to invite officers from the Australian Electoral Commission to attend the ceremony, so that new citizens can immediately register on the electoral roll and vote (Ivi: 5, 42). Recognition of Australia's Indigenous peoples is not required, but encouraged (Ivi: 27, 32, 35). To attend the ceremony and make a pledge leading to the conferral of citizenship as a legal status, a person must be on the list of conferees for that specific ceremony and must be able to present satisfactory evidence of identification to officials before the ceremony commences (Ivi: 34, 44). Otherwise, their attendance and participation does not have legal effect. There is no dress code specified, however, conferees are encouraged to dress in a manner that 'reflect[s] the significance of the occasion.' (Ivi: 25). Local Councils have been encouraged to develop their own dress codes (Ibid).

Finally, it is important to note that only citizens who have acquired Australian citizenship by conferral (previously called naturalization) are required by law to attend the citizenship ceremony to make the pledge. Individuals who acquire citizenship by other means, such as birth, adoption or by descent, are not required to make the pledge. Indeed, the citizenship ceremony is the only time that the citizenship pledge is performed in Australian society.

3. Narrating citizenship, narrating national values

This paper argues that the performance of the pledge narrates certain national values as central to the Australian citizen subject. While the role of the citizenship ceremony has been critically examined in the UK, including a comparative study (Byrne 2003), there is limited research on the practice in Australia and its recent developments. Indeed, a closer examination in Australia is timely because over the past 15 years, there has been increased public attention placed on the role of both the pledge and its performance, with an increasing number of detailed revisions of the Code.

The Australian citizenship pledge as it is currently performed ensures that citizenship status and identity is associated with three core, national values. Those values are loyalty to Australia, national unity, and social cohesion. The performance of the pledge not only ensures that conferees promise to uphold these values in the future, but it also

demonstrates that they already embody those values. It is only after successfully performing these values will a migrant be conferred Australian citizenship.

3.1 Loyalty to Australia

Loyalty is enacted not only through the words of the verbal promise made in the second line of the pledge, but also through physical compliance with the rules and protocols throughout the entire ceremony.

At all times, government representatives lead the ceremony, and the conferee is expected to comply with all official directions. The Code requires officials to assess compliance by attesting that they have witnessed each conferee reciting the pledge (Ivi: 12, 38-39). The official then completes an official pledge verification form (Ivi: 30).⁶ Where a conferee has not been observed to repeat the pledge, or at the very least mouth the words since it would be practically impossible to hear their individual voice, he or she will not be conferred citizenship. There is no chance during the ceremony for the conferee to express their own expressions of loyalty to Australia. Indeed, other than repeating the pledge, there is no opportunity for the conferee to speak at all. The performance of the pledge is orchestrated by government officials and only government officials or their invited guests are given the opportunity to speak.

3.2 National Unity

While there is no explicit reference to national unity in the words of the pledge, scholars have observed that nation-states often use oaths of allegiance and pledges to build solidarity and national unity through simultaneous action and sound (Kertzer 1998; Turner 1982; Goffman 1959). Unity is achieved through the performance of the pledge, spoken together by the conferees out loud, which creates an auditory experience of unity (Macduff 2015). The Australian government has explicitly acknowledged that the purpose of the pledge in the ceremony, declaring that 'The Pledge joins all Australians in a statement of unity' (Australian Government 2008: 3). The national context of the pledge is signaled through the presence of national symbols, the Minister's message, and the many references to the Australian nation, the Australian community and the Australian people.

Increasing the number of witnesses to the pledge amplifies the sense of national unity experienced. The government encourages conferees to bring guests to the ceremony. Local Councils often hold their ceremonies outside, in open spaces. The more accessible the ceremony is to the everyday 'passer-by', the greater the sense of unification that the performance generates. The Code suggests that ceremonies be held in town halls or parks (Code 2019: 23). Most recently, the government has encouraged Local Councils to hold their ceremonies on days which coincide with other events likely to draw a general passing audience of Australians, such as Australia Day (Ivi: 20). The government urges that 'every effort' should be made to encourage the local and national media to attend ceremonies, and information is given to the Local Councils on how to facilitate this (Ivi:

⁶*Australian Citizenship Act 2007 s 20(b).*

30). Since 2015, citizenship ceremonies held on Australia Day have been televised nationally.⁷ These initiatives have increased the potential size of the audience to include the entire nation, which heightens a sense of national unity.

3.3 Social Cohesion

The third value demonstrated by conferees is their commitment to social cohesion. While the government has officially described Australian citizenship status as ‘a common bond’ since at least 1993 (the Act, preamble), the concept of citizenship as a common bond found a particular articulation through the policy of social cohesion.

Although not explicitly acknowledged, the government emphasis on ‘social cohesion’ replaced its policy of ‘multiculturalism’. In the 1980s, the Australian government supported multiculturalism as a policy that accommodated the cultural diversity of migrants (Koleth 2010; Lopez 2005). However from the 1990s, in Australia as elsewhere, this policy began to attract strong criticisms for being too divisive (Holton 1997; Koleth 2010). In particular, the concern was that migrants would expect the Australian nation to recognize their own laws and cultural practices, leading to ‘ethnic tribalism’ (Blainey 1984).

In one particularly strong statement that reflects the government’s understanding of how any recognition of diversity must be subject to a firm commitment to national institutions, former Treasurer Peter Costello stated that

Australia is often described as a successful multicultural society. And it is in the sense that people from all different backgrounds live together in harmony. But there is a predominant culture just as there is predominant language. And the political and cultural institutions that govern Australia are absolutely critical to that attitude of harmony and tolerance. Within an institutional framework that preserves tolerance and protects order we can celebrate and enjoy diversity in food, in music, in religion, in language and culture. But we could not do that without the framework which guarantees the freedom to enjoy diversity. (Costello, 2006)

The statement conveys the view that any recognition of cultural diversity must be contained by loyalty to the pre-existing social and political structures. This view is now captured in the policy of social cohesion and symbolised by citizenship. In the information booklet provided to migrants interested in becoming Australian citizens, the government states that in Australia: ‘While we celebrate the diversity of Australia’s people, we also aim to build a cohesive and unified nation’ (Australian Government 2020: 9) and that, ‘Australia successfully combines ethnic and cultural diversity with national unity. Citizenship is the common bond uniting us all’ (Ivi: 2).

The performance of the pledge enacts a model of social cohesion, specifically how cultural diversity is contained by a commitment to national values. On the one hand, some expressions of cultural diversity are permitted. The government recognizes religious diversity through the provision of secular and non-secular versions upon which conferees may make the pledge (Ivi: 39). The Presiding Officer also might refer to the contribution that new citizens make in their welcome speech (Ivi: 37). Additionally, the government

⁷ See Australian Broadcasting Corporation ‘Australian Day: Flag Raising and Citizenship Ceremony 2019’. <http://www.abccommercial.com/librarysales/program/australia-day-flag-raising-and-citizenship-ceremony-2019>.

promotes citizenship ceremonies by visually noting the cultural distinctiveness of the conferees. Images in official publications providing information on citizenship often foreground a diverse range of skin tone and hair colour, as well as national, cultural or religious dress (Ivi: 9, 21, 30, 37, 42, 47).

Yet while some signs of the cultural diversity of conferees are acknowledged, the ceremony also carefully reinforces the appropriate limits of its expressions. Expressions in the form of linguistic diversity are not permitted. There is no opportunity, for instance, to make the pledge in a language other than English (Ivi: 38). Participation in the ceremony itself conveys the importance of an overarching obedience to the laws of the nation state, and as discussed above, the demonstration of national values of loyalty and unity.

The performance of the pledge is not only a mechanism through which a particular social understanding of citizenship is narrated, in the same way that a story is told. It is also a mechanism through which the meaning of citizenship itself is constructed and validated. The next section will analyse these three specific national values by situating them in the Australia's wider social, cultural and political context.

4. Citizenship, Australian national values and a politics of cultural difference

The performance of the pledge constructs a narrative where the legal citizen subject enacts three national values. While these national values are presented as culturally neutral and universally accessible, this section argues that these values operate in a racialized and exclusionary way. The Australian government's increasing emphasis on the importance of the pledge suggests it has become a critically important site through which citizen subjects are constructed. However, this site reveals an irresolvable paradox. On the one hand, it is a site through which the cultural diversity of migrants is neutralized, producing migrants as non-threatening members of the nation. On the other hand, the performance of the pledge constructs migrants as objects of national suspicion. This paradox generates a precarious form of citizenship status with significant social consequences.

The performance of the pledge narrates these three national values to conferees in a specific context. As only migrants are required to make the pledge, then it is only migrants who must demonstrate that they can embody these values before acquiring Australian citizenship status. The targeted nature of the requirement reinforces a racialized understanding of Australian citizenship. Fozdar and Low for instance, have recently argued that public narratives about citizenship values and the importance of 'abiding by the law' particularly exclude the Muslim Other (Fozdar and Low 2015). They argue that while the requirement that people must 'follow our laws' appears to be an objective and rational basis for being accepted as a member of the Australian community, it follows a period of increased suspicion towards migrants (Ibid). This suspicion builds on a history of representation of Muslims by the Australian media as deviant. The Australian media has represented Muslims as violent criminals, terrorists, religious fundamentalists and misogynists (Poynting et al 2004; Kahir 2006; Poynting and Mason 2006; Foster 2011). The representation of Muslims as religious fanatics in particular has created suspicion as to whether Muslims can put their religious beliefs to one side and accept the authority of the Australian nation, its laws and its social and cultural values.

The language of complying with the law is a neutral and rational requirement, yet it conceals its racialized operation in the Australian social context. The normative standard of obedience to the law is built on a concealed social assumption that some races (and cultures) are more law-abiding than others. The narrative of a 'law-abiding' citizen conveys a racism which is 'coded', rather than overt (Fishkin 1995).

The Australian government maintains that the acquisition of Australian citizenship status is inclusive and 'open to all' regardless of race or culture. With its explicit commitment to inclusion and non-discrimination on the basis of race, cultural or national origin, it is unlikely that the government or the courts would ever acknowledge the racially exclusionary construction of national values. To be sure, the criteria for citizenship set out in the Act does not make any distinctions based on racial or cultural origins. However, this paper argues that through targeting migrants, the performance of the pledge racializes the Australian citizen subject. The pledge reinforces the narrative that racial and cultural difference makes migrants less compatible with national values and consequently, less suitable for Australian citizenship. In this way, the national values performed during the pledge provides a standard against which the behaviour of migrants can be criticised. A discussion of two examples illustrates this point: the justification for the introduction of the citizenship test and the introduction of the citizenship stripping provisions. These two examples demonstrate how Muslims are narrated as being particularly incompatible with Australian national values, and therefore are unsuitable Australian citizens.

4.1 The citizenship test and Sheik Al Hilali.

In 2006, public criticism of a Muslim cleric was used to generate political support for the introduction of a citizenship test. In October that year, Sheik al Hilali was in news headlines for making misogynistic comments. While his comments were derogatory, he was targeted by the Australian media for criticism. Criticism of the Sheik focused on his inadequate demonstration of Australian citizenship. In particular, the media noted that since the Sheik had become an Australian citizen by conferral, he ought to be familiar with the Australian values in the pledge of commitment (Cadman 2006). The Sheik was also criticized for his refusal to speak English in public (Bolt 2006). His refusal to speak English was highlighted in relation to his participation in the citizenship ceremony, with critical comments in editorials such as 'did he sing 'Advance Australia Fair' in English?' (Mitchel 2006).

The criticisms about the Sheik's inability to comply with Australian values was understood to be due to his Islamic faith. As a religious leader, the Sheik was a representative of all those who shared his faith. This leadership status enabled the media to generalize criticism about the Sheik to criticism of Islam, and therefore criticism of all Muslims. Commentators argued that the Sheik's actions served as a problematic exemplar and a 'lightning rod for negative commentary' (Ferguson 1994: 103). Criticisms of the Sheik but also Muslims more generally were used to justify arguments for restricting access to citizenship (Macduff 2018).

The inability of migrants to follow Australian values was a reason used to justify the introduction of a test before migrants could apply for Australian citizenship by conferral. In parliamentary reading speeches discussing the citizenship test amendment, 10 parliamentarians explicitly referred to Sheik Al Hilali. There were also a handful of parliamentarians who made indirect references to the Sheik, which suggests that this incident was broadly influential (Ibid).

4.2 Citizenship stripping and Syrian freedom fighters

The second example that demonstrates how Muslims are narrated as incompatible with Australian values concerns the recent expansion of citizenship stripping provisions. In 2015, a number of Australians travelled overseas and participated in the Syrian civil war. The government considered the involvement of Australians in this overseas conflict troublesome due to the terrorist threat these ‘freedom fighters’ posed should they return to Australia. To address this national security concern the Australian government sought to expand the grounds upon which a person could be deprived of Australian citizenship (Australian Government 2015: 1).

At first, the government proposed that a wide range of terrorist and security offences would lead to a repudiation of allegiance to Australia and Australian values. There was, however, strong criticism of the proposed amendments. These criticisms led to some changes, in particular, a narrowing of the range of offences that would lead to the deprivation of citizenship. However, the amendments that were ultimately passed still expanded the grounds upon which Australian citizenship could be revoked (*Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Act 2015* (Cth)).

Currently, the Act provides that a dual citizen who engages in acts of terrorism overseas, or who is committed of a terrorist offence in Australia, may lose their Australian citizenship (see *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*: sections 3). While legal scholars have criticized these amendments (Pillai and Williams 2017), the most relevant issue for this paper is how these events have narratively associated terrorist activities with a rejection of Australian values and Australian citizenship. In turn, these associations invite opportunities for the ongoing public surveillance and scrutiny of fellow citizens for anti-citizenship conduct. As the government and the general public identify terrorist organizations as predominantly Muslim, the burden of suspicion has fallen on Muslims to continually assert their commitment to national values and to Australian citizenship.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the narratives communicated by the performance of the citizenship pledge at ceremonies is interesting because of what it conveys meanings about citizenship status. The growing interest that the Australian government has shown in the performance of the pledge suggests that it is an important site through which to operate a covert racialized agenda about national values. Despite the official claim is that the meaning of Australia citizenship is inclusive, this paper argued that the performance of the pledge facilitates racialised understandings of Australian citizenship status. The consequences are significant. Not only does this covert racialization of citizenship make it more difficult for migrants to acquire Australian citizenship, but the citizenship status acquired by migrants is conditional and precarious. This might even be described as ‘second class’ citizenship.

Certainly, citizenship ceremonies are not the only events where Australian citizenship is narrated. While this paper has argued that the performance of national values by citizens is tightly controlled at Australian citizenship ceremonies, alternative and more inclusive narratives of citizenship and national values do occur. However, as Ewick and Silbey note, while narratives of exclusion and narratives of resistance often draw upon the same power structures and relationships, narratives of resistance do so in order to reveal

the hidden political agenda (Ewick and Silbey 1992). Resistance, they argue, is in making these relationships visible *as narrations*, that is, as something that is formed through language and so could be different. Once it is recognized that the citizen subject and its associated national values are constructed through narratives, then a different notion of what citizenship means can be imagined. The critical task then, is to locate counter narratives in the tactical engagements of the everyday (Ewick and Silbey 1992; Isin and Nielsen 2008). In Australia, that would involve exploring the lived experiences of citizenship as resistance to the national values of loyalty, unity and social cohesion as discussed in this paper.

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