

Hello,

My name is Idan. I am happy to be an Australian citizen, and thankful to have been welcomed into this country.

My country of birth is Israel. In my three decades living there, I have seen, often at first hand, the impact of conflict, prejudice and economic inequality on everyone. When fences proliferate, it gradually becomes hard to tell whether you are being fenced in or out.

I thus firmly believe that it is in Australia's national interest (as well as its moral duty) to reach out to the world, especially to countries – in our region as well as outside it – which are still struggling to provide basic education and health services to their population. Increased insularity, suspicion and animosity now seem poised to become the global trend. Against that backdrop, Australia can and should aim to shine as a developed country that welcomes engagement rather than puts up defences. As an Israeli, I feel confident in saying that fences cannot achieve long-term security peace and prosperity.

In the next 10 years, I would like to see Australian foreign aid increased – at least to its former levels if not beyond – and used to help eradicate illiteracy and innumeracy, provide basic food security and clean water to all, reduce the incidence of preventable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, and help fight the spread of antibiotic-resistant infection strains.

I believe that this perspective is applicable to (and in fact synonymous with) economic relations. With the current US government announcing that it will aim to retreat into its own economic shell (and other developed nations appearing to follow suit), an opportunity arises for Australia to become a partner that developing nations can trade with and trust.

The Australian economy is reliant on trade; we can't keep selling houses to each other *ad infinitum*. We can export our raw materials, our technology, our educational institutions and our cultural products. For all of these, we would benefit from a global population that is able to use these things, and happy to accept them preferentially from us.

Thank you for your attention,

Idan Ben-Barak