**Ahelee:** Hi, my name is Ahelee Rahman and I go to Melbourne Girls Grammar School. I’m really passionate about creating equal opportunity for all students.

Today we will be exploring what it means to be a citizen and the roles and responsibilities of citizenship.

So what is citizenship?

Citizenship is a legal status granted to the people of a country. Citizenship involves both privileges and responsibilities. Australian citizens can vote in elections, stand as a candidate in elections, and apply for an Australian passport. Some responsibilities of Australian citizenship include, voting in elections, following and obeying the law, respecting the rights and freedoms of Australia, serving on a jury, and defending the country if necessary.

I sat down with Hayley McQuire, who is a proud Darumbal and South Sea Islander to discuss what Australian citizenship means to her. Particularly from an Indigenous Australian perspective. Hayley is also the Co-Founder and National Coordinator of the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition, and the co-chair of Learning Creates Australia.

Hi Hayley, thanks for joining me today.

**Hayley:** Thank you for having me.

**Ahelee:** So tell us about your background identity and how you became involved in the work that you do.

**Hayley:** I spent some time working with young people around the world, advocating for our different rights to education through the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative. I saw the real need to make sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this country, especially young mob have a voice around the decisions that get made about them and their education.

**Ahelee:** What does Australian citizenship mean to you?

**Hayley:** There’s so many different levels of citizenship. I have Australian citizenship, I have an Australian passport. As a Darumbal woman, I have a citizenship to my Darumbal nation. There’s also a more global view of citizenship. We are all sharing place and we do have a responsibility to our place on this planet.

**Ahelee:** What do you think are the responsibilities of Australian citizenship?

**Hayley:** I think the responsibilities of Australian citizenship is to really recognise our history and to really learn our true history. And so you need to understand like how these relationships were formed, to understand how things are today. Why we have the government system that we have, why we have the type of policies we have. We can make sure that people understand exactly what they’re inheriting when they get that passport. And I have really strong connections to obviously my Darumbal country because that’s where we’ve been for thousands and thousands of years. And I also have a responsibility to make sure that I invest my time now in reviving my language, understanding my stories, understanding my history and passing that on. Belonging is about place, it’s about family, it’s about understanding your history and respecting the land and country that you’re on.

**Ahelee:** Thank you so much for joining me today and sharing your insights into citizenship.

**Hayley:** Thank you.

**Ahelee:** So, how do you become an Australian citizen?

If you are born in Australia and at least one of your parents is an Australian citizen, you become an Australian citizen automatically. However many people choose to become Australian citizens by applying. To become a citizen, you must meet certain requirements, such as living in Australia, being of good character, language requirements, and knowledge of Australia. If your application is successful, you attend a citizenship ceremony where you will officially become an Australian citizen.

I then spoke with Aditya Jain who is a year 11 student at Melbourne High School. He and his family immigrated to Australia from India and they became citizens in 2016. We will be discussing and comparing our different experiences.

Thank you so much for joining me today.

**Aditya:** No worries, it’s my pleasure.

**Ahelee:** So tell us about your background identity and how you and your family became Australian citizens.

**Aditya:** I was born in India and I lived there for eight and a half years until I moved to Australia in 2012. And then we became citizens in 2016.

**Ahelee:** My parents lived in Bangladesh and then they became citizens before I was born. So I was born as an Australian citizen. Were there any challenges to adapting to life in Australia?

**Aditya:** The biggest one would be a language barrier and definitely like missing old friends and family.

**Ahelee:** What can Australian young people do to help new Australians like yourself feel as though they belong in Australia?

**Aditya:** So I think there are two big things, the first one is being accepting of differences, and the second one is being inclusive.

**Ahelee:** What was the process of becoming an Australian citizen for you and your parents?

**Aditya:** So my parents had to sit through a test about the Australian values and history. Personally, I didn’t have to do that test because I was under 16, but anyone over the age of 16 in your family has to do it.

**Ahelee:** What do you think are the privileges of being an Australian citizen?

**Aditya:** The ability to vote, being able to freely express your own opinions within the community, being able to freely travel and come back to Australia.

**Ahelee:** I think Australian citizenship it’s also about having connection and feeling a sense of belonging to Australia and to Australian culture.

**Aditya:** Yeah, feel connected to the members of the community.

**Ahelee:** I feel like there’s also this principle within Australian communities to give back. What do you think are the Australian values?

**Aditya:** Democracy, equality and respect for people of all cultures and backgrounds.

**Ahelee:** Yeah, I completely agree with what you’re saying about respect and inclusiveness. Unless someone’s a First Nations’ person, everyone has ancestors who have migrated to Australia. So I think that’s really important for us all to acknowledge and to be accepting and tolerant.

**Aditya:** Becoming a citizen, allows you to get a sense of feeling that this is your home now and becoming a part of the Australian community. Have that confidence that you really are going to live here for the rest of your life.

**Ahelee:** Thank you so much for talking to me today. It’s been so great to hear about you and your family’s story.

**Aditya:** No worries, it’s been my pleasure.

**Ahelee:** Today we spoke to Hayley and Aditya about what citizenship is, and why it matters.

So, what does citizenship mean to you?

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