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My Journey

Meat Pie with Soy Sauce

A perspective from an Asian migrant in Australia

John Chin

Meat Pie with Soy Sauce - A perspective from an Asian migrant in Australia

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Dedication

To all the peoples who make up our great country Australia including the Aborigines, the settlers and their descendants, the migrants and their families and the tireless leaders of the nation.

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This book is written for my wife and two adult children all of whom I adore.

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Preface

My first declaration is that I am not really a writer. I am, in fact, a Chartered Management Accountant and Business Analyst specialising in Information Technology (IT). I have an entirely efficient and methodical mind and consider myself a pragmatist, with both feet planted on solid ground. It just so happens that I have an obsession with getting to the bottom of things, with finding out the best way to achieve my long term personal goals and the goals for my adopted country Australia. If I believe I am doing the right thing, I will endeavour to apply myself totally in the achievement of my goals, no matter how painful the process, and regardless of the cost to my reputation.

I have a dream for my country. I can see a more secured, fairer and more equitable society for Australia. I see a country which makes the best use of her natural resources and which directs her human resources through the appropriate use of technology and scientific knowledge. I see a country well managed economically and which has sustainable environmental direction in the long term. I see a country with democratic ideals maintained for a better educated and enlightened society despite living in a less secured world. I see a country with social policies that allows the development of tolerance and better understanding among all the cultures and faiths. Most of all I can see laughter and celebration among all of us and greater personal effort to achieve our dreams.

This book is written with my goals for Australia in mind and so as to share my dream with other Australians who have the same goals as me. I want to share my ideals and views, and in doing so exercise my democratic rights which I hold so dearly. The democratic process is the most valuable asset we have in Australia and should not be taken for granted.

This book is not intended as an academic dissertation. It is a story of an ordinary Australian seeking a better life for his family and for his country. Mistakes may have been made along the journey, but failures and mistakes allow us to learn and improve and to possess a more tolerant attitude. Admission of mistakes made in the past needs to be acknowledged and those acknowledgements make us stronger and better people.

I warmly welcome you on this journey in seeking a better future for our country Australia. Your presence greatly honours me.

John Chin
August 2004
Sydney, Australia

Introduction

I am a Chinese migrant from Malaysia, a multiracial South East Asian country, who has lived in Australia for the last twenty-three years. It is my intention to record my views and opinions for my new home. Most of all I have this passion to document the direction and dreams I have for my beloved country and home Australia. I had lived and worked in Malaysia for the first twenty-eight years of my life. This exposure to different cultures and lifestyle provides me an uncommon position to compare the differences in life-style and environment in these two countries. Since settling permanently in Australia in 1981 I have visited Malaysia at least once every year in order to maintain family ties. I am the only member of my immediate family in Malaysia to migrate to Australia.

I was born into a westernised Chinese family in British Malaya, a subject of the Queen of England and the British Commonwealth. My four brothers and I all attended English language schools in Malaysia (independent since August 1957). After High School, I trained as an accountant. To complete my academic education, I attended post-graduate training in Management Information Systems in Sheffield, England in 1977 and 1978. When I arrived at Heathrow Airport for the first time in September 1977, I had this nostalgia and felt as if I was going home to the capital of the old British Empire. I realised that my upbringing had made me most comfortable with Western and British history and culture, Hurricanes and Spitfires, loyalty to Queen and country. I am an Anglophile and a staunch monarchist.

There have been only eleven years out of the last thirty years in which I have not worked as an employee for American multinational companies in the technological and Information Technology fields. I have travelled widely in the Americas, Europe, Australasia and many other parts of Asia in a work capacity as well as privately. On my annual vacation, mainly overseas and also throughout Australia, I prefer to be a traveller rather than a tourist. I am more interested in exploring the life-style and the cultures of other countries rather than the tourist sites.

I did not realise it at the time but the most important event in my life was the day I left Malaysia and settled in Australia. Up until then, I had never lived and worked in any country other than Malaysia. It was the attitude of reckless abandon and the heady ideals and impetuosity of youth that lead me to an adventure in a new society and culture and a new life. I had no expectations except that Australia, based on Gross Domestic Product per capita, was eight times wealthier than Malaysia in those days. The Malaysian economy has expanded substantially since 1981 and has reduced the gap in the last twenty-three years, albeit from a much lower economic base.

My permanent move from the South East Asian city of Kuala Lumpur (KL) to Melbourne was way back in July 1981. KL is the capital city of Malaysia, a country which today in 2004 has a multi-racial population of twenty-three million. My wife joined me in November 1981 after selling the family home and settling all our business and private affairs. At the time, we were in our mid to late twenties. Australia was an exciting new world for us. Our two children were subsequently born in Melbourne in the years 1982 and 1985. We all moved to Sydney in September 1986, due to a serious hay fever allergy which I had developed. The temperature is

about four degrees (Centigrade) cooler in Melbourne compared to sunny Sydney. Many of my best friends still live in Melbourne.

It was an exciting challenge adapting to my newly adopted country. Within three years in 1984 I became a proud Australian citizen.

I can remember being in shock in March 1983, when there was a change of political party at the Australian federal government level. I had never experienced a change of government in my entire life back in Malaysia. The same political party or coalition of political parties had been in power for the twenty-four years of nationhood from independence in August 1957 to 1981, and indeed, is still in power today. Such an event (change of political party or coalition of parties at the federal government level) is still impossible in many Asian and African countries without a revolution. The incumbent government tries to hold on to power as long as possible through various means, fair or foul. Strong opposition is likely to lead to a jail term or exile for the leaders, even death. This is because the current regime fears that an incoming opposition would probably jail them for corruption or other charges, which many of them probably deserve.

The Australian governments at the state level also change with almost regular intervals. This is the practice of democracy at its best. In mature developed economies, such as Australia, there is always an alternative government in opposition, quite ready to take over if the people lose their faith in the ability of the incumbent politicians. Even the action of a minor official could bring down a government. Some of us Australians may not realise that our political scene is so different to that in most of the countries in our Asian neighbourhood. They have had the same party, or coalition of parties, in power since their independence from colonial times more than thirty or forty years ago.

In Australia, elections of local municipal or council officials are normally held every two years. Voting at all levels of government within Australia is compulsory for Australian citizens and certain residents. Fines can be imposed if we do not vote on polling day. We Australians can be fined and penalised for not wearing seat belts in vehicles - even rear seat passengers must wear seat belts. The use of a seat belt in the back seat is not compulsory in Malaysia. The irony is that the driver of a vehicle in Australia can be fined and penalised for non-adult passengers who do not wear seat belts. We in Australia may be among the most regulated people in the world. The authorities here believe these actions are for the greater benefit and safety of the Australian people.

Unlike in most of the countries in our Asian neighbourhood, roads in Australia are usually kept in decent repair, traffic lights work, most traffic fines are paid and there is very little corruption. The streets are relatively clean, there is very little malnutrition, and nobody has to starve. Poverty in Australia may possibly be defined as a family which has just one colour television set at home. Justice and fair play is available to all people at all socio-economic levels.

Until I came to Australia, I did not feel that I was totally free to express my views and opinions or that I was treated as an equal among my fellow citizens. Freedom of expression and freedom of speech should not be taken for granted. In most countries

in our neighbourhood, one could be imprisoned almost indefinitely in some cases for expressing a different political viewpoint. One could be jailed for possessing a different sexual orientation. One could also be jailed or assassinated if one threatens or is on the way to defeat the people in power.

In Australia I feel that I am an equal among my fellow citizens and residents. The country has laws that forbid discrimination on the grounds of race, creed, social class, status, mental health, sexuality, age, gender and religion. Despite being a migrant, this country exudes a feeling of belonging and care. Almost all Australians believe in fair play and justice towards all. There was an occasion where I was unjustly dismissed from my employment, but the outcome of the civil case was just and fair. Australia is considered by most an honest and fair country. A relative who is a practicing lawyer living in Asia indicated to me that justice (in civil cases and situations similar to mine which failed in the courts) in many cases may be bought and be compromised. That is a fearful thought to me. I believe in justice. I can imagine the feeling and emotion of these people whom justice had failed. Loss of reputation and financial loss can mean suffering and even suicide.

Historically, Australia has been a trusting country. Most Australians assumed that we are honest in our dealings. Certain elements of society have taken advantage of this trust and are still trying their best to rely on this trust. There is compassion and care for the lower socio-economic structure of society. Society has changed in the last twenty or thirty years. Laws and regulations have been implemented that require proof and justification for any action. To me any person, especially a migrant, who tries to defraud the Commonwealth has no gratitude and does not deserve to live in a decent society such as here in Australia.

Let us compare the situation to some of the other countries in our region. In contrast and compared to many countries in our Asian neighbourhood, it is possible for foreigners as well as residents to have to bribe the custom officials at the airports just to get in and out of those countries. Corruption is endemic, entrenched and officially sanctioned in many countries in our Asian neighbourhood. It has been a part of life in many neighbouring countries for hundreds of years. It is considered an accepted way of life for some parts of those societies. Once a country gets into a corrupted mode, it is very difficult to get out of the entangled morass. In most cases, the economies of such countries inevitably spiral downwards.

Among the countries in our neighbourhood, the island nation of Singapore is an unusual Asian country in respect of development and social justice. The people of Singapore have their first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to thank for their fortunate environment. The English-educated lawyer and ex-Prime Minister set a tight and narrow course away from corruption since independence in 1965 from the Federation of Malaysia. Today Singapore is a beacon of light in a sea of chaos in most of countries of South East Asia. The small island nation is regarded as a developed nation economically but unfortunately is situated in a dangerous location where most of its surrounding neighbouring countries live in abject poverty. The miracle of Singapore as a nation is a fine example of nation building. She achieved a developed nation status from a third world nation in a mere generation. The message to the countries in the Asian region is that economic development and social justice is

possible and achievable. Third world nations can and do prosper. One of my brothers had settled in Singapore since 1978 and he too has prospered in prosperous Singapore.

Compared to neighbouring Singapore in the last twenty years, Malaysia had economically performed about half as well. Since my departure in 1981, highways have appeared throughout the length and breadth of Peninsula Malaysia. I often get confused with the numerous flyovers and suburban highways that have appeared all over the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. The economy is booming, and housing and building activities are flourishing all over the country. The level of highway and building construction activities in Kuala Lumpur would put both Sydney and Melbourne to shame. The non-bumiputra (other than the government favoured native Malay race sector) or Chinese and Indian sector, having played almost no part in the public sector, was holding their own in the private business sector. Two of my brothers are doing well with their own private businesses in Kuala Lumpur which is being helped along by the booming economy in Malaysia.

Would I trade my place in Australia for another country? The answer is a definitely resounding 'no' from me. Australia is and will be my home in the long term. From my experience in all my extensive travels overseas, in most aspects there is no better country among all the countries in the world for my family to live than in Australia. If I was wealthy and involved with commercial business, the USA could be regarded as an excellent place to live, conduct business and to enjoy life generally in the short to medium term. The North American continent has the population base and market that any successful business venture must consider as a place of business. The population of the North American continent is about twenty times larger than Australia. But it is Australia where my heart really belongs. It is Australia where I will stay in the long term. I would not contemplate living in any other country for the long term. This book will relate the reasons why Australia is the place to call home.

Australia has nurtured me and provided me with all the knowledge and exposure that is only possible in the free West. Life would have been very different for me if I had lived in Malaysia only. I hope to relate the environmental differences and compare Australia to the rest of the world. Living in Australia and learning about all the freedom and equality I have enjoyed and am still enjoying inevitably leads me to express my gratitude to my country Australia. This country accepted me as a hopeful and thankful migrant. This is the reason I am proud to be an Australian. I declare my full loyalty to my adopted country Australia and I would personally defend my country against any foreign threats and against any person who seeks to destroy our way of life, our culture and our mores.

I enjoy the cultural diversity and the fabulous variety of food that this country provides. There are delicious foods such as pasta from Italy, pavlova from Greece, rare beef noodles from Vietnam, sushi and sashimi from Japan, kim chi and bi bim bap from Korea, sweet and sour sauce on spare ribs and roast duck from Hong Kong, kebabs, baba ghanouj and hommos from the Middle East, handmade noodles and Peking duck from China, red tea with milk and pearls from Taiwan, korma and butter chicken curries from India, red and green curries from Thailand, satay and Hainan chicken rice from Malaysia, beef rendang from Indonesia, curry crab from Singapore, kava from Fiji, venison from New Zealand, plantains from Africa, paella from Spain, salted raw herring from the Netherlands, blood sausages from Germany, escargot

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from France, caviar from Russia, delicatessen items from continental Europe and best of all the beautiful crispy French fries from MacDonald's of the USA. What about the vast variety of exotic fruits such as mangoes, rambutans, dragon fruit and mangosteen. The South East Asian durian is regarded as the king of fruits. This assumes that one can get through the spikily thick and hard cover to reach the delicious flesh. We have to get use to the unearthly and unusual smell. Someone (most likely a European friend) had indicated to me that it was like eating sweet creamy cheese in a latrine of a third-world nation. What an array of sumptuous and delicious victuals. These resulted from the precious migrants and their culture from more than 150 countries all over the world.

For a country of twenty million people, Australia is the premier sporting nation of the world. New Zealand is probably the only other country to produce top level sports personnel per head of population. The easily available and reasonably priced sporting facilities everywhere for sports such as athletics, tennis, golf, rugby, Australian Rules Football, cricket, soccer, netball, lawn bowls, croquet, skiing and others (including disabled athletes) contributed to the sporting prowess of the nation. The facilities of the Australian Institute of Sport located in Canberra cap off the excellent performance of Australian top athletes.

Australia provides an environment of equality, fair play and justice to all. I do not expect to live in a perfect country populated with perfect people but we must learn to live and accept all other people with their own cultures and mores. We must be tolerant of other cultures and learn to understand the background of people from other faiths. We must learn to live with understanding of the positions and views taken by other people. All of us are different and we may come from different backgrounds. Let us celebrate our diversity and ethnicity among all the cultures in Australia.

Let us enjoy the freedom from hurt, injustice and hunger. Australia is a heavenly place compared to a lot of other countries in the world. Let all of us Australians work towards a fairer and more caring Australia.

Chapter 1
The last twenty-three years (1981 –2004)

Different federal governments have come and gone in the last twenty-three years in Australia. The federal Labor government from the years of 1983 to 1990 brought about great changes in the economy and the direction of manufacturing industries. During that period the Australian dollar was floated and the inefficient industries were phased out. The then federal Labor government made the difficult decisions and we have to be thankful for those decisions and events. But from then on in the later years the relatively long-lived federal Labor government turned inward looking and lost the plot in the early nineties. Opportunities for substantial tax reforms were lost because of fearful and poll-driven federal politicians who had no courage and foresight. Three years of opportunity were lost in the fateful election result of 1993. We in Australia suffered badly in senseless politicking between 1993 and 1996. The leading politicians of the day tried to use the mask of an Australian Republic to distract the public from more urgent and important economic tax reforms and proper economic management.

When the federal Labor Party experienced their worst electoral disaster in history in the year 1996, a new era came in with a statesman-like incoming political leader. After all the years in opposition, new ideas were proffered. He took the country into an era of tax reform and took a risk on his personal political ambition for the sake of the country's future. The gamble paid off and the country is well on the way to economic and tax reform and along with it the benefits of greater prosperity overall. The prosperity of the last five or six years is because of the audacity and reform-minded direction of the present Coalition government at the federal level. It is my belief that the tax and other economic reforms may not have gone far enough. Australia must be prepared for greater changes to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. We must be the clever country using our human, spiritual, intellectual, political and technological base along with our natural resources to drive us to greater prosperity in an environment of peace and well-being.

We must be willing to share our prosperity with our less affluent neighbours and the less well-off inside and outside of Australia. From what I have experienced in the past, my suggestion is that we should consider setting up volunteer organisations with the assistance of the federal government. These volunteer organisations are more suitable than government organisations at providing aid at the grassroots level assisting in the development of all relevant areas in our neighbouring countries especially Indonesia. We could make use of Indonesian-speaking Australians to spearhead the grassroots development of the fishing industries, agriculture, infrastructure and other economic areas. There is no necessity for every individual project to be commercial viable in all aspects. What is really important is the development of ties between the people of Australia and the people in our neighbouring countries. The assumption is we must have the permission from the authorities to conduct such aid activities. It is the people ties at the grassroots level that could really assist the common people in our neighbourhood. We need to help our neighbours along in their economic and infrastructure development path. In the long term, they may be influenced by our Western democratic way of life and join us along the path of greater economic prosperity. It is important that we must ensure that we do not intrude into the cultural aspects and lifestyle of our neighbours.

Within Australia, my suggestion is of increased affirmative action by the local, state and federal governments to assist the native people of Australia. This affirmative action will ensure the native people have a larger share in the substantial economic resources of our nation. There must be more funding provided where selected individuals and the native population in general can, with state assistance, have more opportunity to health, education and better jobs. The funds provided should also be applied effectively. The affluent part of our country must help the less affluent people and provide them with the opportunity for self-improvement. This is the least we can do for people who are traditionally less endowed. A fair society is one that helps one another, especially those who are less endowed. In my extensive travels, I have come across examples in many countries where there is a wide gap between the haves and the have-nots. It is my belief that those situations are possibly a recipe for potential future disaster and societal upheaval. In the drive towards a fairer society, we must remember that there will never be a situation where a perfect society exists. It is the goal of trying to achieve the environment of a fairer society among all people that makes us more human.

Chapter 2
Current government direction (1996-2004)

The policies of the current federal government of more tax reform and privatisation are in the correct direction. The reforms introduced from the years 1996 to 2004 have given us the foundation for a more robust economy and potential for steady and sustainable economic growth. We need more ongoing economic and tax reforms, better and more equitable ways of funding the unlimited requirements from our scarce resources and more progressive and effective use of our scarce resources. How do we achieve this?

We have solved our major funding issue by the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the year 2000. The traditional revenue base on goods was gradually reducing as the service sector was expanding. The revenue from the Bass Straits resources was gradually winding down. We are now benefiting from such an audacious political move. What are the next future directions?

Privatisation is a key component towards greater economic and effective direction. Government is at best not suited to run commercial organisations. Examples had been shown by a few disastrous financial results of certain Australian State governments move into commercial operations in the late 1980's. The Post Office, the Banks, the Insurance companies have mostly been privatised. I believe that the Telecommunication industry should be completely privatised as well.

From past experience, state-run organisations such as the rail network are inefficient organisations that may waste lots of public money. Governments at any level should not be running commercial operations and in the long term, almost all state-owned commercial organisations should be privatised. Governments should only be left with decisions on policy matters on treasury, health, education, defence and state administration.

Efficient administration and operations result in cheaper services and products and therefore our exports become more competitive. The commercial advantage is obvious. The protectionism policies and short term goal of saving uneconomic jobs would only make us suffer in the long term. The difficult tasks of floating the Australian currency and opening up Australia to the world in the nineteen eighties, therefore making us more efficient producers, has made our products and services more competitive against the world. Opening up the world to trade liberalisation is the only way to achieve long-term economic growth and also help third-world nations achieve a faster economic growth rate to catch up with the developed nations of the first-world.

In the last eight years the federal Coalition government had drastically reduced the public debt from the year 1996 to the current year 2004. Through prudent and careful economic management, the federal government has pruned public expenditure and waste resulting in budget surpluses and reduction of the public debt. The excesses of the federal Labor party in the prior years from 1983 to 1996 have been arrested. The greatest danger of a future Labor Party in the federal arena is the return to the excesses on the public purse.

Chapter 3 Border Protection

Our current Border Protection Policy is to deter the activities of illegal migrant racketeers from profiting from the flow of illegal migrants into Australia. Every country must maintain a controlled inflow of legal migrants within its borders. Lack of such control will send a wrong message to the operators of illegal migrant rackets. We must send a strong deterrent message to the operators of these illegal migrant rackets.

There are lots of well-meaning Australians who believe that our current policy of deterrence is harsh and unfair. There are just two stark choices for us well-meaning Australians. We either maintain this current Border Protection Policy or we face the harsh reality of those facing most other Western nations in the world. Millions of illegal migrants are flowing across the borders into Europe and North America. Do we want an additional one hundred thousand refugees on our northern shores every year or an additional one million refugees in the next ten years? If we could certainly answer the assertion in the positive, then we should discard our current Border Protection Policy.

There is a cost involved for everything we do and every decision we make. We do want to have a properly organised program to bring in refugees from all over the world. We should have our fair share of migrants and refugees from all over the world. But it is precisely the illegal economic refugees we are trying to prevent and stop them from taking the places of other deserving migrants and legal refugees. We must be realistic with our expectations. Either we have a harsh Border Protection Policy or we have no policies at all. We will have to face the future with the realities of life.

I, too, am a migrant. I took my place in the legal queue. I believe it is unfair for an illegal migrant to take the place of a legal migrant. We have to weed out the economic migrants from the true refugees fleeing the terror and inequalities and the suffering caused by political and cultural differences. We may need to drastically increase the intake of our refugee migrant quotas but it has to be determined by the government of the day. Let us not complain and whinge without taking into account the harsh reality of life.

Let me provide a practical example. A lot of well-meaning Australians have indicated that we should be more humane and should allow tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of refugees from around the world into Australia. The presumption is that Australia can afford to accept millions of refugees. The presumption is that the settling of a lot of those refugees is somewhat a responsibility of Australia. How many refugees can Australia manage to absorb every year? On compassionate grounds I would like Australia to accept the whole lot. What are the consequences?

Human carnage through ignorance has been a way of life for thousands of years. Human suffering because of political and cultural differences has always existed. It still exists and will exist in the foreseeable future without abatement for a long time to come. Until we remove human ignorance which in itself a difficult task, human

suffering will continue. It is difficult to change human nature. We were brought up in a certain manner and any cultures that threaten our way of life may have to be eliminated. We even invoke the name of God to justify our decisions and actions. Tolerance and understanding of other cultures, I had surmised, have a long way to go.

For well-meaning Australians who prefer an unlimited inflow of refugees based on compassionate grounds, we would have to let the Australian public to set a realistic limit. The real test is to ask the question "Would you mind sharing your family home with another family?" This question may change the minds of a large majority of us as it would mean the intrusion of others into our privacy zone. It is only when we are individually affected by decisions made by higher authorities such as paying increased amount of taxes will we realise that probably should be more prudent and realistic.

Are we in Australia responsible for alleviating some or all the suffering caused by displaced refugees throughout the world? That is a very interesting question. Countries with relative peaceful environment such as Australia and New Zealand did not exist by accident. Most of the other countries with displaced refugee problems are those with tribal or feudalistic cultures and are racked by civil wars. Ignorance and corruption are the main causes of wars and human suffering. Australia and the West did not cause such human suffering in those countries. Although we in Australia and the West are far from perfect, I believe we should try our best to help other less fortunate nations without intruding into their cultures or making their culture look inferior. Economic aid and education (to be agriculturally independent) is the first step in assisting our close neighbours bridge the economic gap between them and us. In the long term it is the investment in the neighbours' economy and infrastructure that may help our poorer neighbours out of their economic and management morass.

Personally I would prefer the legal annual refugee intake to be increased. Unfortunately it is up to the federal government to decide on the best mix and quantity of migrants and refugees. We should leave it to the experts rather than for us ordinary Australians making judgements without adequate data and knowledge.

Chapter 4 Foreign relations

As we live in a region where the racial and cultural mix of the population is quite different from ours, we have to be very sensitive of the feelings of our neighbours. We are deemed to be an economically developed and racially European country. We are treated with derision by certain of our neighbouring countries who are suspicious of our intentions. We are different, we look different and we behave differently. We are much more affluent than most of our neighbouring countries. It is my perception that one of the reasons for this suspicion is the yoke of colonialism of past years for countries within our immediate region. This practice of colonialism only ended in our region as recent as thirty years ago.

We will not be easily accepted by our neighbouring countries as part of Asia. Materialistically, we are too well off compared to our neighbouring countries. Australia, sometimes regarded as part of past colonial masters, has been considered by some as having plundered the economies of other countries and that we are still trying our best to exploit our less well-off neighbours. On occasions Australia has been blamed for the economic misery of neighbouring countries. I believe it is a difficult situation between neighbours which have wide disparity in culture and economy. How do we in Australia treat and handle our Asian neighbours?

It is my belief that we must initiate more development programs at the grassroots level in our neighbouring countries that will benefit the people of those countries directly. Providing aid on a government-to-government level is not an effective solution for helping our neighbours. One million dollars in aid provided at a government level will only see ten thousand dollars trickling down to the common people. Corrupt officials and administrative cost will probably siphon off the rest of the funds.

There is a level of distrust for us Australians from people coming from certain of our neighbouring countries. Our neighbours sometimes believe that economic aid provided to them always comes with a hidden agenda. Trading ties may need to be an obligation or even being forcefully enhanced between nations. Cultural infection may also be a fear factor. Countries with religious fundamentalist leaning influences do not prefer the open, and perceived more decadent, culture and mores of our lifestyle. Some of our neighbours are wary and suspicious of our lifestyle. What they do not realise is that Australia had gone through the same journey of religious conservatism in the recent past and we are now progressing towards a more tolerant and open-minded society.

In the long term, the future of Australia lies with our close historical ties with countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and other Western countries which are more culturally aligned to us. We have thrown in our lot with them in the past and we will continue to do so in the future. It is my perception that realistically the United States of America is the only country that can keep the peace and sustain us in times of dangers and potential future wars in our region.

Despite the above statement, we must develop and maintain closer economic and cultural ties with countries in our region. There is a fine balance in Australian bi-

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lateral relations between Asia and the West. The past and current decision of accepting large group of migrants from all countries in our region is definitely the step in the right direction of assimilating into our region. The White Australian policy, which was abandoned in the year 1972, began the move for us into the hearts and minds of our neighbouring countries. Otherwise I would have played no part in the Australian economy.

Chapter 5
Economic direction

The introduction of a broad based consumption tax, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and tax reform, in the year 2000 set the direction for our country which will have a significant impact to the future funding of our national budget. The GST and tax reform will provide sufficient funds to maintain the broad goals of defence, health, education and infrastructure needs of the nation. The current federal government took considerable political risks in the consideration and implementation of this new tax regime which extensively overhauled the previous outdated tax regime. Some of us may not have realised or remembered that there are political leaders in this country who, through personal courage and political risk, made momentous decisions in order to move Australia towards the appropriate economic direction for the future. The present federal Coalition government should be congratulated for their courage in this direction when they went to their first re-election with their new tax regime in the year 1998.

It was fortunate for the federal Coalition parties; there was sufficient buffer in the previous federal election in the year 1996 to hold against the drastic change in economic direction. It must be remembered that back in the previous federal election in the year 1993, an election was primarily lost because of the proposed new tax regime by the federal Coalition parties.

In a democratic country such as Australia, the public is exposed to all the views and opinions of diverging and contrasting political viewpoints. This is the strength of democracy. The Australian public are not fed with just one point of view. The public have the choice of alternative views and have the right to choose between alternative viewpoints. Regular elections held at all levels of government allowed the voters the choice to choose between different political parties who possess different viewpoints. We in Australia live in a lucky and fortunate country. It may be quite different in certain other countries in our immediate neighbourhood.

The country is only as good as the government we choose to elect at any one time. The possibility of alternative governments means that political parties in government have to defend their right to stay in government. In the last fifty years in Australia, changes in government at the federal level have only taken place when the incumbent was extremely unpopular. We can remember the election years of 1996, 1983, 1975 and 1972 when there was a change in government. The opportunity to change allowed Australia to prosper and progress in the right direction. As a result the opportunity for corruption at the government level is considerably lower as a possibility. Elections are expensive affairs but the cost of democracy is well worth the perceived high cost.

Do politicians pander to the Australian public with populist economic policies or should we be brave enough to push through with beneficial reforms? It is my belief that for a fairer and more equitable Australia, any tax regime implemented must be progressive. In the past, it was relatively easy for wealthy individuals to avoid paying taxes by manipulating their incomes with expensive tax lawyers. A consumption tax cannot be so easily avoided. The more we choose to spend the more consumption tax we incur. This consumption tax is a progressive tax. The wealthy cannot easily avoid such a tax.

I have realised the importance that the press, the radio stations and television channels play in communicating ideas and viewpoints to the public. The responsibility of these public communicating channels is considerable. For most of the time, the general direction of these communication channels decides the direction of political decisions of the Australian public. I could only remember one incident when the public communication channels got it all wrong. In the referendum for an Australian Republic in the year 1998, it was my belief that based on the direction of the printed press, talk-back radio and the commentaries from television presenters; the Australian Republic was an inevitable conclusion. To our surprise, it was a very close affair with a difference of only half of one percent in favour of our status quo as a constitutional monarchy with the Queen of Australia as our Head of State. Among all the states in Australia, it was only the state of Victoria that voted for a Republic and it was also by a very small margin. This proved to me that we Australians are a more discerning lot than I had assumed previously.

Free trade with the USA is a very important issue to the economic future of Australia. Australia is a trading nation. World trade is the life blood of the nation. The liberalisation of trade is the aim of most countries in the world. Most countries in Europe are part of the European Union which has free trade arrangements within the Union. The USA, Canada and Mexico also have another free trade arrangement. The countries of South East Asia have the same arrangement. Australia cannot exist on her own without belonging to a free trade arrangement. In any arrangement there have to be a compromise for the greater good. What is important is that in the long term, the economy will benefit in any free trade arrangement with any other trading block. It is my hope that party politics will not blind us to the long term benefits of any such free trade arrangements.

Chapter 6
Defence for the future

It is imperative for Australia to maintain a deterrent defence force to defend our lifestyle, our culture, our values, our land and our way of life. We are a wealthy nation situated among neighbours who are mostly less endowed. If we are more trusting of others to do the right thing by us, we would have failed in our duty of vigilance and may perish at our own hands in the not too distant future.

What do I mean by those words above? Our immediate neighbour has a population which is more than ten times greater than ours and yet has an absolute Gross Domestic Product lower than us. Their standing army is twenty times the size of Australia's. The neighbour would have no great reason not to share in our wealth if it is within their means. How could they share in our wealth? Unfortunately you and I know that there is only one way as shown in history.

It is therefore very important for us in Australia to spend sufficiently and effectively in maintaining a defence force that will deter such a possible forced invasion to our shores. This is especially true when I have heard from some quarters that the reason our immediate neighbour is relatively poor was due to the past plunder of the Western countries for their historical wealth. There may be a slight element of truth in this statement but reasonable people would see lots of holes in this logic. Despite this we must remain vigilant.

The level of endemic corruption in one of our neighbouring countries will probably keep most of the people of that country poor for a long time to come. It is my belief that only a political revolution with a new leader uncluttered with power politics could save that country from the current endemic corruption. People power is the salvation but when these new leaders come to power, will they not be corrupted by wealth and power as well? This is a terrible cycle of corruption and absolute power. Only education and people power can help such a nation out of the cycle of corruption. The Western countries came out of the morass over the last 1,000 years of political development. Will we need to wait another 1,000 years for certain of our neighbouring countries as well?

Let me consider a hypothetical scenario. Given a chance, any of our neighbouring countries would possibly invade us and completely change our way of life. Genocide is a remote possibility. How do we in Australia avoid such a future possibility? In the long term we need to maintain our friendship and relationship with our friendly and culturally similar nations such as the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA). In the long term these are the only countries that can guarantee our independence from external threats. We would also need to keep on our toes and maintain a deterrent defence force that would not allow the possibility of foreign invasion. It will cost the nation heavily to maintain such a powerful deterrent force. Australia will need to achieve a technological advantage as this is the only way we can achieve a superior advantage over our populous neighbour. What we lack in numbers must be offset by technological advantage.

If we realise our traditional links and ties with the USA is a strategic one, we must play our role as partners in the long term relationship. The USA has close historical, cultural and defence ties with Australia. It is the involvement of the USA in both the previous two World Wars (of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945) that were contributory and allowed us to live in a free and democratic world. The role of the USA was imperative in holding Communism at bay from our shores. It may be true that not all the activities involved abroad by the USA in the last sixty years were above board. People do make mistakes and may be oppressive in certain circumstances. I still support the Australian role in Korea, South Vietnam and in Iraq. These were all strategic decisions where we try to bring about democracy and freedom to people all over the world. The objectives were honourable. What would have happened if we gave in to the German military dictator called Adolph Hitler back in the year 1939 when he invaded free and independent Poland? Getting rid of Saddam Hussein the oppressor and military dictator of Iraq along with his regime is an honourable objective. Otherwise sooner or later the people of the free world may have to suffer the same fate as we had with Hitler.

It takes courage to believe in our policies and to stick to it. Just because we are losing American lives and other lives in Iraq as well does not mean we have to give up our long term objectives. Australian troops were instrumental in maintaining the freedom of Malaysia when she was threatened by Indonesia back in the year 1963. Australian troops would not have been withdrawn from Malaysia if and when the going gets tough back then. Most of us Australians are not wimps. The maintenance of freedom and liberty is never cheap and is never easy. Over the last one hundred years with just the two World Wars, millions of lives of the Allies (mainly British/ American/ Canadian/ French, Australian and New Zealanders but also including other nationalities) had been lost defending the freedom and liberty of all the people of the world.

Why would any of our neighbours involve us in a collision course? In their environment state-sponsored corruption is endemic. The wealthy is extremely wealthy but constitutes just a very small minority of less than one percent of the population. The middle class segment represents less than twenty percent. Over eighty percent of the population live in abject poverty. Without a change in political direction, it is possible that some of the nations are due for a possible violent political upheaval. Most of the common people are hungry and angry. What would the politicians do in such a situation? The politicians may possibly try to distract the people and blame their misery on any of their more wealthy neighbours. If that is the case, I can see that it may be possible we in Australia may soon be in serious trouble. This is a hypothetical case. I could still recall reading about the situation in central Europe in the 1930's when the National Socialist Party came to political power in Germany. Within a short period of six years from 1933 to 1939, Europe was engulfed in a war nobody wanted or could have been predicted. We in Australia must be prepared.

How would any of our neighbours involve us in a collision course? It will not be easy in the current situation and environment. Australia possesses a far superior air force and navy. Australia is an island nation. Just like island fortress England who have defended its shores successfully (since 1066 CE) for nearly a thousand years, Australia can defend her own shores today. At the current moment, it would be

difficult for an enemy which possesses an inferior air force and navy to successfully invade Australia.

Let us consider another hypothetical case. What are the current strengths of our potential enemy or invader? They have a superior army in terms of numbers. They share a common border with our friendly neighbour Papua New Guinea (PNG). It is my belief that PNG is potentially our Achilles' heel. PNG was previously administered by Australia. While achieving independence in 1975, we in Australia still have a duty to assist in the defence of any of our friendly neighbour, especially PNG. Otherwise with the fall of PNG, our future aggressive neighbour would be staring at us across the Torres Straits which is just a few kilometres from our shores of our islands in Torres Straits. That would be a potential and serious danger for us in Australia in the future if PNG falls to aggressive opposition forces. We in Australia will need to be vigilant. This potential situation is only a hypothetical case. We should remember that in the year 1938, potential open conflict with Nazi Germany was also a hypothetical case.

We must emphasise that currently we do have strong and friendly economic ties with our most populous neighbouring country. The above discussion is just a potential outcome which may never take place. Unfortunately, we must always be prepared for the worst eventuality. That is the only way to prepare for the future. We must be realistic in our prediction of any future outcome. A change in the political environment in any of our neighbouring countries may only be a few years away.

As a young teenager living in Malaysia in the year 1963 just after the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, I recalled practicing protective measures and drills in the primary school in which I attended. We have to duck under the desk in any classroom whenever a bomb drill was sounded. It was fortunate for us in Malaysia that the bombing by the enemy did not actually take place. There were a few skirmishes along the common border of Indonesia and the Malaysian state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo between the regular defence forces of Indonesia and the British Commonwealth defence forces. It is my belief that the political formation of the ex-British colonies of Peninsula Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah (previously called British North Borneo) into the new Federation of Malaysia was only possible because of the defence commitment of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand to Malaysia. The policy of strong defence deterrence against any aggressive neighbour is the only way to maintain our way of life, our freedom and liberty. Australia will need to be vigilant at all times.

Chapter 7
Health for all of us

Health is a very important issue to all of us Australians. We want to have the best equipped and fully staffed hospitals and also easy access to retirement homes. We want the best of medical and hospital services. What does it cost us to provide this level of service and how much can Australia afford in terms of the health budget?

We must be realistic in our expectations. We can only afford as much as our national budget can bear based on the payment of our taxes. It is pertinent that we must not absolve ourselves from the payment of the appropriate taxes to society. When we avoid our obligations and try to deceive society of our tax payments, we ultimately deceive ourselves.

There will never be enough hospital beds for all of us at all times. We have to learn to live with the available resources. The only way to look after ourselves is to try our best to fend for ourselves first. We must ensure that we have enough funds to look after ourselves at all times and especially in our retirement. Services to the aged in the community are a very expensive function and are ever growing as our population become progressively older. Our current natural Australian population is actually contracting and without migrants we would have negative population growth.

While we have not much choice but to accept the current level of health services we possess, the services themselves, comparatively, are not a bad achievement in itself. If we can maintain our current level of health services, I personally would consider it to be acceptable. As our national economy is currently on a sustainable low to medium growth (of between two and four percent), we cannot expect huge improvements in health care and services. We will also need to help our less affluent neighbouring countries and less affluent fellow Australians. We need to learn to sacrifice our own needs in order to help others who have greater needs compared to us. It is my personal belief that compared to most other countries in the region and most others who live in Australia we are a fortunate lot.

Even when we compare to countries such as the USA, it is my belief that health service-wise, we are actually be better off. We have national medical cover for all Australians, which is funded by the compulsory taxes we contribute. We have basic public hospital and dental services which are also covered by our tax contributions. In addition, we Australians may also contribute to private hospital, health services and dental cover. This unique health services environment we possess is quite different from the great land of the USA where national health cover does not exist. We Australians are a fortunate lot. In Australia we are thankful for what we have.

Chapter 8
Education direction

The current debate about private schools and public schools is an interesting topic to me. The Prime Minister had indicated that some parents are moving their children out of the public school system because of the 'values' or lack of values as taught by teachers in the public system. There is always an element of truth in every statement. What is the actual situation?

Certain parents chose to send their children to private schools because of the perceived exclusiveness. Not all such parents who chose the private school option are well-to-do economically. Quite a proportion of such parents have to work multiple jobs in order to send their children to fee-paying private schools. Is the private school option worth all the expense? Of course it is worth it otherwise there would not be a steady growth in such numbers in the growth of private schools attendance in recent years.

My two adult children, now attending universities in the Sydney area, are products of the public education system. My daughter is finishing her fifth and final year of Dentistry at Sydney University and my son is currently in his second year of a four-year Information Technology course at the University of New South Wales. I believe that the role of parents is the key to the academic success of their children. Unfortunately, it should be considered by us that academic success should not be the sole measurement of success in life. The stress of modern lifestyle and the resultant breakdown in relationships revealed a possible lack of exposure in the way education is conducted in schools, colleges and universities. It is my belief that we may possibly have failed society in the certain directions provided to the children and ourselves. In our current secular society (in a political-correct environment) we have tried to ban all the vestiges of the teaching of religions and its associated civic duties from the academic system. It is possible that we may have somewhat failed to instil minimum standards of civil expectations of society. We may need to rethink our direction in this aspect of life.

Academic success does not routinely lead to financial success as I have discovered in life. In actual fact, academic achievement may be a barrier to entrepreneur success and daring. My academic qualifications had stunted me in my goals to live and work in an entrepreneurial society. In the past I had always just wanted a cushy well-paid position working for someone else. Why have I done to myself? I am fully responsible for my actions.

Private schools are good for students who are not self-reliant and self-motivated. Teachers in private schools are generally more involved in the academic and extra curricular activities of their students and guide them personally along the way. From what I have seen in the public school system generally, students are left mostly on their own to fend for themselves. This independence is good for the students in the public school system because when they enter institutions of further education, it is the sole responsibility of the students themselves to advance themselves academically. There are very few people in the institutions of further education that will motivate the students along the way in their course of study.

The danger of the private school education system is the strong reliance of students on their teachers for motivation. On entering a college of further education, this motivating guidance is no longer available and may cause a disruption to students in the private school system on their ongoing higher education. That is the main reason why a private school education is only useful if we are aware of their limited benefits and possible pitfalls. The awareness of the environment is more important than just blindly doing things just because the neighbours are doing it.

The mores and values taught to our children do not just come from the school system. It is my belief the most important values in life come from home, especially from the parents and grandparents. The most important years in the development of a human being are the first five years of life. We learn most of our mores and values from our environment at home. The actions of our parents and guardians provide us with the general direction in life. Our belief systems are taught and acquired most from the home environment. By the time we attend school at the age of six, any learning from then onwards is basically academic and factual. It is very difficult to change the values and belief systems once a person becomes an adult. I can vouch for that statement based on my own personal experience.

Therefore we cannot expect the schools systems (public or private) to teach the fundamental values and beliefs systems of society. The schools can provide general guidance and alternatives but ultimately it is the student themselves that have to decide for themselves. The actions of most students will be based on mores that are not very different from the values and belief systems of their home environment.

Generally speaking, the level of public education funding is appropriate for a country of our size and standing. We are a fortunate country. Our Gross National Product, the sum of all our services and production in this country is relatively high compared to most of our neighbouring countries. The number of university places and places in other advance educational institutions is comparatively high. Yet it is inevitable that there will be regular complaints of insufficient places available in institutions of higher education every year from certain quarters. It does keep the government on their toes. We need to be realistic with our expectations in the area of public funding in our institutions of education.

We must realise that funding for education have to compete with funding for defence, health, welfare and other areas. There is no perfect allocation of funds in the national arena. The federal government have a tough job in allocating these limited funds to all the competing areas. A responsible government should not fund current requirements with loans and deficits as our future generations will have to bear a greater burden to service the public debt. We have to be responsible and be fair to our young and future Australians and be aware that we have to be collectively responsible for all our current actions.

Chapter 9 Political Reform

In our geographical region where we are located, we possess the most advanced and progressive form of democratic government. We only have to travel to countries in our neighbourhood to see how fortunate we are compared to most of our neighbouring countries. Yes, we still need political reform; but the real reform is the way we should help our less fortunate of Australian society and this should include the natives of Australia. We must also help the common people of our neighbouring countries at the grassroots level.

In order to have to reform our economic, administrative and operational effectiveness, we may need to change some of the current approach to the running of certain state enterprises. Privatisation is one of the ways to achieve greater administrative and operational effectiveness. We must avoid pandering to a few selfish political groups and try to achieve greater economic efficiency through improvements in our operational processes. We must take into account of the existence of the weak and the poor and not ride rough shod over the weaker components of society. It is a difficult balancing task protecting the weak, the few and the disenfranchised.

We are fortunate to live in the land of the free. We are free to express our views and opinions. We have the option of protecting our rights as free citizens. We even go to the extent of protecting the legal rights of illegal refugees when they land on our shores. We are a civilised nation and our shores will always be a haven for refugees who seek a place of refuge. Yet it is important to realise that our small nation (in terms of population) cannot take all the unwanted and the undesirables of the rest of the world. In Australia we will be responsible and take the fair share of displaced persons from everywhere in the world. We will need to have a plan to organise the refugee intake in a controlled manner.

Chapter 10 The future for Australia

Since the year 1996 Australia has been on the path of balanced growth and in the general direction of a stronger revenue growth powered by the new tax regime. This has resulted in more funding for a stronger defence force and more funding for health, welfare and education. There is a good future potential for all Australians to share in the new economic prosperity in an environment of relative peace and harmony.

Personally one of my concerns would be when we in Australia finally become a Republic in the not too distant future. The last Labor Prime Minister who championed the cause of the Republic in the mid 1990's may actually be appointed as President by a future federal Labor Party who would then be on the government benches in Federal Parliament. This would not be the best possible outcome for me because I personally do not rate that past federal Labor Prime Minister highly in terms of economic management and maintaining the appropriate ties with our neighbouring countries. Hopefully he may turn out to be a more enlightened President of the country, if he is to be appointed. I will have to respect the will of the people.

That past federal Labor Prime Minister, though once declared as the greatest Treasurer in the world, had in the past done certain things which I would consider in poor taste. For him to pander to the Asians that we should be part of Asia is demeaning to us proud Australians. The vast majority of Australians have non-Asian historical links and to beg the Asian neighbours to accept us as friendly and helpful neighbours and to ask for their acceptance is ridiculous in my opinion. Neighbours should have mutual respect for one another in all circumstances. We do not need to belittle ourselves and beg for acceptance.

Let us take a look at what that past federal Labor leader did to our image in Asia. It had caused the Asian neighbours to have an excuse to distance themselves from Australia because they think certain Australians have an inferiority complex. It had been indicated in certain neighbouring countries that unless we change the cultural mix of our country, they will never accept us as an Asian country. We in Australia historically have a large majority of people from European descent and as a result, we will never be accepted by our Asian neighbours as an Asian country. Why should we pander to such unenlightened neighbours anyway?

Australia is a developed nation and we are much more affluent than our immediate neighbours with the possible exception of the island nation of Singapore. In actual fact, Singapore may be the only country that would prefer to have a closer economic and defence ties with Australia. That country Singapore is the only country in South East Asia that has a Chinese-dominated government and is surrounded by much larger nations that are much poorer economically and dominated by races that do not exactly love the efficient and commercially-minded Chinese. Singapore, as a nation, is in no position to defend itself against its vastly larger neighbouring countries. Its close defence ties with the USA and Australia is the only way to secure its own viability to survive in the long term as an independent island nation in the region. I believe that the governments of Singapore and Australia are currently negotiating long-term economic and defence ties for the long term future.

Indonesia, being the poorest nation by far among our close neighbours, is perceived to strongly resent the wealth and affluence of some of her neighbours. Indonesia had been rated as one of the most corrupt economies of the world. A large proportion of the nation's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few officials and business people and its populous poor are among the world's poorest. Over eighty percent of the people in Indonesia live in absolute poor housing and have poor infrastructure. Rampant corruption is one of the major cause of the problems but officials blame everything and everyone else but themselves. It had been indicated to me by certain people that certain Indonesian Chinese in the past were to be blamed for the spread of rampant corruption in the country. It was also claimed by some that the affluent countries of the West had, in the past, absconded with most of the wealth of the country. I have come across certain Indonesians who continue to blame everyone else but themselves for their country's plight. It would not surprise me that their neighbours Singaporeans and Malaysians, who are much wealthier and more affluent, should also attribute the source of their relative wealth to the countries of the West.

A past Indonesian strongman and leader had led the country for over thirty years until 1998. He was the one of the main cause of the current economic situation in Indonesia. I have referred to a past federal Australian Labor Party Prime Minister who had often kissed the hands of this past Indonesian leader and addressed him by the respectful and endearing term 'Bapak' which means 'Father' in the Indonesian language. Personally I would have preferred to stand aloof from such a dictator who claimed to have brought economic prosperity to the Indonesian people. If this past dictator claimed he had brought economic prosperity to Indonesia, I would really want to observe what real poverty is.

Most of our South East Asian neighbouring countries have a culture of corruption within their economies but at different levels. Singapore has the cleanest form of government, which is considered by some to be even cleaner than most Western nations. That is why the wealth of the nation has filtered down to the grassroots level. Some of us may not have realised that Singaporeans are wealthier per capita than either Australians or New Zealanders.

Australia needs to encourage a more open, transparent, honest and democratic government among its Asian neighbours. We must not pander to dictators. The last federal Labor Prime Minister did not show a very good example in this area.

Australia does not need to be part of Asia. Our Asian neighbours will never accept us as being part of their region. One of their political leaders in South East Asia recently indicated that we would never be accepted as an Asian neighbour as long as we have a majority of non-Asians in our population. Who gave them the right to criticise our Australian national population policy? Do we have to pander to their narrow minded and inept minds? We would never submit our national sovereignty to our external neighbours. Our neighbours should never tell us what to do in terms of our national sovereignty. They should set their own house in order before telling us what to do in our national population policy.

In any trade agreement, countries have to negotiate a mutually fair and equitable deal for all parties involved. We do not need to be threatened by self-serving political leaders in certain countries. Our trade with the West, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore

and other countries are just as important as the Asean or Association of South East Asian trading bloc. We can also form trading blocs with other trading nations such as USA, Japan and China. Political leaders come and go. The political climate in all countries changes with the times. The economy of Australia can outlast any individual unfriendly politician. Respect for each other must be mutually negotiated and should not be conducted under duress.

The language used sometimes by the last federal Labor Prime Minister when he was in federal parliament is not something that I, being an Australian, would be proud of. We must show a minimum of respect and decorum to our opposition and respect the views of others which may be different from ours. We should not berate others in a personal manner. The fair and decent treatment by our current national leader for the opposition and others who have different views is a breath of fresh air for all decent and honest Australian. I pray that we would not have to endure the long-term public image of the last federal Labor Prime Minister. Of course if things had changed over the last few years, it would still be acceptable for us to have him as a future President of the nation. One must not develop a closed and inflexible mindset.

Australia must remain an open, transparent and democratic country and shine as a beacon for most of the aspiring Asian neighbours. As a migrant from an ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) country, I could not choose to return to my country of origin. I was accidentally born in Malaysia to Chinese parents and I find Australia more suitable to my lifestyle and to my Western (culturally) upbringing. I was educated mainly in English and I could not read or write comfortably in any other language. My two adult children who are born here know of no other country as home. My wife, who was reluctant to migrate to Australia initially, discovered that she could not live in Malaysia anymore. The way of life here in Australia culturally and facilities-wise is a big improvement compared to the bureaucratic lifestyle in our early years living in Malaysia. In addition, the climate there in Malaysia is too oppressive to us compared to temperate Sydney.

We want to continue to live in a fair and caring Australia. We are not responsible for all the poor and suffering people of the world and we are not responsible for the poverty in other countries. Even Papua New Guinea (PNG), under the past administration of Australia is not the responsibility of Australia. The people of other countries will have to accept the consequences of their own collective decision and actions. We in Australia do have a duty to try to influence the democratic direction of our neighbouring countries. To us in Australia, I believe it is in the long-term interest for the majority of people in those neighbouring countries.

Australia will continue to attract its fair share of illegal migrants from our neighbouring countries and from countries situated far away. We will continue in our Border Protection policy to defend our shores from self-serving interest groups and racketeers among our neighbouring countries. We will continue to put illegal migrants in detention centres in order to deter future illegal migrants. We have to send a strong message to those illegal migrant scheme operators and racketeers. We will continue to attempt to arrest and jail the illegal racketeers in order to deter them from their illegal activities.

Australia, as a fair and caring country, will continue to take our fair share of refugees and migrants from all over the world. We will continue to welcome the cultural diversity from all our migrants. We as migrants to Australia may want to keep our migrant cultures and identities but the most important criteria are that we must assimilate into the Australian culture and observe her laws and regulations. If we choose to whinge about our country of adoption all the time, I suggest that we as migrants might as well pack up and return to the country of origin. That does not mean that we may not protest against certain legitimate and reasonable claims. What is important is that we must be fair and equitable in our dealings with other Australians.

Parents are responsible for the cultural upbringing of their children. It is important that we must be tolerant of others in the country. We should not be judgemental of others in a country with different cultures and mores. A recent event caused great suffering to a migrant family originating from a very conservative Asian country. It was indicated the children of that conservative migrant family were told in passing that certain scantily dressed Australian women deserved to be raped. Our children, if they hear the wrong message too often from adults, may actually believe that these misleading statements be true and fair without realising their terrible consequences. This misunderstanding may have caused the recent gang rapes by the children of migrants on Australian women. There may be vast differences in the mores and culture between the migrant's country of origin and Australia.

There were indication from the parents of such convicted gang-rapists that they declared their children to be well brought up as religious followers and is of decent parentage. They were absolutely correct in their assertion. They brought their own cultures and mores with them to Australia but they could not accept the mores and environment of their country of adoption. This is a sad example of cultural differences. We as migrants should not try to change the mores of the country of adoption. We do not need to follow every aspect of our country of adoption but we must be more tolerant of the views and the practice of others.

The current federal Coalition government, consisting of effective and experienced politicians is well lead by a courageous and far-sighted federal leader. The leader knows what he wants for Australia in the long term and he is not ambiguous about his goals and directions for Australia. Always the astute politician with the patience of bidding his time, it has been extremely lucky for him and his supporters. The circumstances of the events leading up to the last federal election was timely. Could the federal Coalition obtain the same timing again in the lead up to the next federal election? Home security issues played an extreme role in the outcome of the last federal election. His team, especially with the capable federal Treasurer and the federal Health Minister, will be able to provide a joint leadership role for Australia's long-term future. The supporters of the federal Coalition look forward to the team holding the reins of government in the foreseeable future and greater prosperity for all of us Australians.

The defence of our country is imperative if we are to survive the future turmoil of our region. The future of the security in certain of our neighbouring countries may suddenly turn sour and fall into extreme religious fundamentalism. We may then face a hostile country right on our doorstep. We must be independently strong enough to

defend ourselves and be able to deter our potential hostile neighbours from even contemplating starting a war with us. Invading PNG could easily draw us into a war we would have great difficulty coping with. We cannot win a protracted land war due to our relatively small population. We must use our brains with our greater economic clout to develop smarter ways of defending our shores and our friendly neighbours. I foresee this distasteful outcome becoming a possibility in the next twenty years.

The reality of Australian politics is that a handful of a few thousand votes in about six to ten marginal federal Parliamentary seats across the nation may decide the fate of the next federal government. About forty percent of the electorate will always vote for their party of allegiance without taking into consideration the immediate needs of the country. It was indicated to me these are the people that possessed 'the herd' mentality. They just follow their party leaders blindly. I do not fully agree with this statement. The balance of the other twenty percent of the electorate decides the fate of the next federal government. They are called the 'swinging' voters, whom I was told to be perceived as the intelligent ones. No matter what the poll forecasts tell us, it is the decision of a few thousand Australian voters that point the future direction of our country. We deserve the government we vote for. Our future lies in our own hands.

In a democratic nation like ours, the possibility of change of government at the slightest whim is actually good for us in the long run. The only problem is that it takes courage and steadfastness for a government to think in terms of the long-term benefit for the country as a whole. We should not belittle the judgement of most Australians. Looking back with hindsight, with the exception of the federal election of 1993 which I believe is an aberration of the long-term political scene, the federal governments elected in the last twenty-three years were appropriate for the times.

The federal election of 1993 was an aberration because of the fear and derision factor. A lot of Australians currently know that the GST is good for the long-term benefit of the nation. It provides a fairer way of taxing us Australians and provides sufficient funds to pay for the future outlay for infrastructure, defence, health, welfare and education. In that year of 1993 some of us Australians were duped into believing that GST could be detrimental to the future of our country. It was a sad day for Australia when the election results began coming in on Election Day that evening in 1993. It was serious enough for me even to contemplate moving to New Zealand for a few years. This was to mourn a perceived forever lost opportunity for the benefits to be brought about by the long-term economic and tax reform. Eventually the following election in 1996 proved that the election result was a real aberration. The federal Labor party suffered the greatest loss of federal Parliamentary seats in the history of Australia. The people of Australia had spoken in 1996.

Despite that, the following federal election in 1998 showed that the fear factor still worked on the deep concerns of the Australian electorate. It took a brave federal Coalition government to stand on their commitment and trust of the Australian people and went to the poll with an economic and tax reform agenda. The election results in 1998 went back to the normal level of Australian support for the main political parties.

In my experience, I have perceived that the federal Labor party is the natural choice of the Australian electorate. It is perceived by most people that the Labor Party is a more

caring entity because it panders to the lower socio-economic classes in terms of wealth distribution. The federal Labor party often gives an impression that it supports the battler in his or her fight against the establishment (business and management). Therefore the federal Coalition has a constant battle to prove to the electorate that the federal Coalition is a better alternative government that provides better socio-economic management and provides for the long term defence needs of the country. In the long-term period of constant and sustainable economic growth, wealth will ultimately distribute to the lowest socio-economic level of society.

It is my belief that it is the business people of Australia that produces wealth for the nation. We should not be misled to believe that expanding welfare is the sole purpose of government. Expanding the economic infra-structure of the country as a whole will provide better welfare in the long term to the rest of the people in the country. If we suppress the economic development of the country, the lower socio-economic level of society will suffer in the longer term.

The economy of the country is best left to people who know how to run the economy in the long term for the benefit of all Australians. Running perpetual national budget deficits is like taking away the future stake from our children and their children. We need to learn how to live within our budget both at the family level as well as at the national level.

Economic development must be sustainable with the environment to be considered and be taken into account. Responsible government is a difficult art and we must allow governments to carry out the will of the electorate. Constant bickering and holding back the decisions of the popularly elected government is not the progressive way forward for our country. Let us give the country a fair go.

After twenty-three years of living in Australia and still enjoying every moment of it, I have seen its growth and spreading prosperity. It is my hope that we will continue on our journey as a country of hope for all Australians and for those who seek a new life in our great and lucky country.

I have a dream. I can see a safe, fairer and more equitable society for Australia. I see a country which makes best use of her natural resources and direct her human resources through the proper use of technology and scientific knowledge. I see a country well managed economically and have sustainable environmental direction in the long term. I see a country with democratic ideals maintained for a better educated and enlightened society despite living in a less secured world. I see a country with social policies that allows the development of tolerance and better understanding among all the cultures and faiths. Most of all I can see laughter and celebration among all of us and greater personal effort to achieve our dreams.

Shalom. Assalamu Alaikum. Good luck fellow Australians.

This is the short blurb at the back of the book.

My Journey

Meat Pie with Soy Sauce – A perspective from an Asian migrant in Australia

Australia is the lucky country. Millions of potential migrants from all over the world, especially those from Asia, would love to have a chance to live and work in Australia. Some have even paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives attempting to get here in an illegal manner. This is a sad and unfortunate situation. I was one of the lucky ones who have made it to Australia in 1981 and have made an improved life style and a decent living while working here.

This book provides a perspective of my views and opinions of my beloved country Australia. An outline of my dream for a better future for Australia is also provided. A country that is represented by nearly all the cultures of the world provides variety and instils understanding to her people. The USA is the original melting pot of the world and it made her the greatest nation on Earth. Australia has seen and understood the implications and is following suit.

I can see a safe, fairer and more equitable society for Australia. I see a country which makes best use of her natural resources and direct her human resources through the proper use of technology and scientific knowledge. I see a country well managed economically and have sustainable environmental direction in the long term. I see a country with democratic ideals maintained for a better educated and enlightened society despite living in a less secured world. I see a country with social policies that allows the development of tolerance and better understanding among all the cultures and faiths. Most of all I can see laughter and celebration among all of us and greater personal effort to achieve our dreams.

This is my dream.

The flags of Australia, Great Britain and USA displayed on the lower part of the page.