

South Africa demands Peter Dutton withdraw 'offensive' white farmer comments

by [Tom McIlroy](#)

The [South African government](#) has called in Australia's envoy to the country and demanded Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton withdraw [comments suggesting white farmers needed protection from a "civilised country"](#).

Mr Dutton has flagged the possibility of farmers facing land seizures being prioritised for visas to resettle in Australia, ordering his department to investigate how the federal government could assist a group he said were facing "horrific circumstances" including violence.

Australia's High Commissioner to South Africa was called in for meetings with government officials in Pretoria overnight

International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu issued a formal request for a retraction of Mr Dutton's comments to High Commissioner Adam McCarthy, saying the government was "offended" by the statements and a full retraction was expected.

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"The High Commissioner, who was accompanied by his Deputy High Commissioner, undertook to immediately communicate with the Australian government to convey the message from the Minister and South African government," a statement said.

Asked about the dispute on Friday, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull stopped short of endorsing the comments and said Australia's migration program was non-discriminatory.

"We have a very large community of Australians of South African ancestry, from every background, and they also make a phenomenal contribution to our very successful multicultural society."

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop defended Mr Dutton's comments on Friday and denied there was a double standard in her colleague speaking up for white South African farmers, but not Palestinian farmers facing persecution by Israel.

"What we do in our humanitarian visa program is assess visas on their merits and that's what Peter Dutton as Home Affairs minister does everyday," she said.



Foreign Minister Julie Bishop wants South Africa to ensure the safety of all its citizens. **Louise Kennerley**

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said he wouldn't make a deep analysis of the comments, but Australia's non-discriminatory immigration system should see every applicant treated equally, including Rohingya Muslims and Christians from South Sudan.

"I don't know what has motivated Dutton to make those comments," he said.

"I have to say though I also read media reports that other South Africans can be the victims of crime."

Greens Leader Richard Di Natale said Mr Dutton was seeking a return to the discriminatory White Australia policy.



Comments by Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton have angered South Africa.

"The bloke is an out and out racist. He's pitching to One Nation voters in Queensland," Senator Di Natale said.

[South Africa's new President, Cyril Ramaphosa](#), wants farm lands to be seized for official redistribution to black citizens, part of proposed solutions to entrenched inequality in the country.

His party, the African National Congress, has promised reforms to address disparity in land ownership and the country's parliament endorsed changes to the constitution to allow land expropriation without compensation in February.

Mr Dutton said this week the farmers needed assistance "from a civilised country" like Australia.



David Rowe

"The people we're talking about want to work hard, they want to contribute to a country like Australia," he said.

"We want people who want to come here, abide by our laws, integrate into our society, work hard, not lead a life on welfare. And I think these people deserve special attention and we're certainly applying that special attention now."

The Home Affairs Department said this week it was monitoring the situation of minority groups in South Africa "in the context of consideration for potential resettlement under the offshore humanitarian program."