

The Times of Malta

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Call on Australians to be counted

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Scores of people throng the harbour front at Barriera Wharf and on top of St Barbara bastions in Valletta seeing off their relatives and friends as they embark on their long trek by sea to Australia. The trip to Down Under in the 1950s and 1960s used to take about a month. Photo from Proceedings And Reports: Convention of leaders of associations of Maltese abroad and of Maltese origin. 25th January to 1st February 2006.

Those Maltese who also consider themselves Australian, whether or not they have Australian citizenship, are being invited to take part in a worldwide census of Australians outside Australia.

The census, called One Million More, is being run until the end of September to coincide with the Australian Population Census, being launched today. One Million More is being organised by the Southern Cross Group (SCG), an international advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora, and Advance, an Australian networking organisation for Australian professionals abroad.

Anne MacGregor, co-founder of the Southern Cross Group, called on all the Australian-born Maltese living here and other Australians who had to renounce their Australian citizenship to fill in the census form. For, even though not legally Australian citizens, they are still considered as part of Australia's diaspora.

The SCG calculates there are some 3,000 Malta-born children to Australia-born parents who had to renounce Australian citizenship in order to retain their Maltese one because dual citizenship was not available across the board in Malta until 2000.

The official Australian Population Census can only capture Australians in Australia, said Ms MacGregor, while One Million More would be a step towards making sure that at least some of the approximately one million who live outside the country are not left out.

One Million More, which is accessible online, has about 50 multiple choice questions including most of those asked in the official Australian census plus some others, including a few on citizenship.

It is asking respondents, for example, about their citizenship connection. Since respondents will include many, who, although Australian are not technically citizens, they will be asked to choose from: Was born in Australia; have been an Australian citizen all my life; or, had to renounce Australian citizenship.

One item deals with voting in Australian elections when living outside Australia in a bid to try to extend the vote to more Australians overseas. The idea is that if one is an Australian citizen, one should have the right to vote irrelevant of where he or she lives.

Those taking the census will not be asked for any contact details so that replies will remain anonymous. Respondents will only be asked for the country they live in. This was being done for people to feel secure in filling in the census. Only one census per family unit should be taken.

The preliminary results will start being issued towards the end of the year and the data will help the organisations in their dealings with the Australian government.

www.onemillionmore.com