

## **Letters to the Editor**

The Age, Tuesday 22 May 2001

### **Dual-citizenship delay harms Australia**

I am writing to express my outrage and concern at the Australian Government's failure to act immediately on the Australian Citizenship Council's recommendation to repeal section 17 of the Citizenship Act (1948) which provides for the loss of Australian citizenship on acquisition of that from another country.

Mr Ruddock's comments last week can be viewed only as a stalling tactic. There are many fundamental reasons why Australians working abroad need to be able to secure citizenship status in the countries in which they reside.

Many common reasons include employment mobility (geographic or cross-industry); social security and pension eligibility in the foreign country; the right to vote; the same rights as their compatriots in these countries.

Furthermore, many Australians working abroad continue to work towards the wellbeing and economic growth of Australia by assisting their families and confirming their ties with Australia.

It is unfortunate that expatriate Australians do not have the right to vote in Australian federal elections. We continue to use Australian passports and are supposed to be represented by this country, yet we cannot vote in affairs of the state, many of which have a direct impact on our future. A prime example of such impact would be the recent terminations of bilateral social security accords between the United Kingdom and Australia.

In situations where Australians working abroad cannot be eligible for foreign social security upon retirement because they have not acquired the relevant citizenship, they will be ineligible for payouts by that country. Guess where the burdens will fall? That's right, on the Australian system.

In the vast majority of cases, Australians working abroad will be faced with a choice of returning home to Australia.

Wouldn't it be better if these people who return home add to Australia's wealth and prosperity rather than being a burden to the system?

JASON CALEY, Quebec, Canada

## **"Consulting" merely pre-election stalling**

Did anyone notice that Immigration Minister Ruddock pulled a fast one on three-quarters of the Australian population on May 17? In announcing the government's measures to "boost Australian citizenship", he hasn't faced up to the only citizenship issue that your readers should really be concerned about.

The government still won't commit to repealing the provision that means you forfeit your Australian citizenship when you take on another nationality. But five million Australians already can legally hold dual citizenship by virtue of naturalization or descent. Where's the justice in that?

Don't be fooled by Mr Ruddock's plans to "consult" the community. This is a stalling tactic so that the government doesn't have to face up to the issue before the election. They have been consulting for two years.

ANNE MacGREGOR, Washington, DC