

Letters to the Editor

Aussie expats unjustly disenfranchised

A WORD from someone who was born in Canberra, grew up there, and was educated there, but has now lived overseas for 10 years. On May 17, Immigration Minister Ruddock pulled a fast one on the unsuspecting Australian public, and you appear not to have even noticed.

The issue I'm talking about is dual citizenship. Did you know that 5 million Australians already legally hold dual citizenship by virtue of descent or naturalisation?

What Ruddock said on Thursday was that the Government does not have the gumption to allow the other three-quarters of the Australian population the right to hold dual nationality as well. He says the Government wants to engage in further consultation, but in fact he's already had two years of consultation.

He still won't commit to repeal s.17 of the Australian Citizenship Act which means you forfeit your Australian citizenship when you take on another

nationality. Over a thousand Australians overseas have written to the PM and Howard on this in the last two years. But most of the Aussies abroad have lost the right to vote if they have been away for a number of years. So the Government isn't listening to us because we don't count at the next election.

This is a plea to all your readers: If you hold only Australian citizenship, don't you think that you should at least have the right to acquire another

without forfeiting your Australian, even if your personal circumstances in life mean that you never actually exercise this right?

There are 600,000 Australians abroad, but fewer than one tenth of us voted in the last election, which shows how powerless we are. We need the help of everyone at home to end this discrimination.

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