

Why doesn't Australia want this little girl?



This is Zoe. She is six and a half years old. She lives in France.

Zoe's mother Janet is an Australian citizen. Janet was born and grew up in Australia. After studying to become a French teacher, Janet found that destiny took her to France, where she met and fell in love with and married Zoe's father, who is French. The couple have made their life together in France.

Janet wanted to be able to teach in the French school system. To do so, she had to be a French national. So Janet applied for and was granted French citizenship.

But Janet didn't know that Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* would strip her of her Australian citizenship when she acquired French citizenship. When Zoe was born, Janet was no longer Australian. Although Janet has since resumed her Australian citizenship, Zoe can never be Australian by descent.

For Zoe, Section 17 of the Citizenship Act has profound and enduring implications. If she ever wants to live in Australia as an adult, she will have to apply, like any other immigrant, for residency status. For example, she would be treated as a foreign student if she ever wants to go to university in Australia. And this despite the fact that her mother, her brother, her uncle and aunt and cousins are all fifth or sixth generation Australians.

Although Australian citizenship law demands that people like Zoe's mother forfeit their Australian citizenship when they acquire a second citizenship, up to five million Australians are already legal dual nationals under the same Act of parliament. Migrants who become naturalised Australians do not have to relinquish their original citizenship. And many Australian-born Australians have a second citizenship by descent.

In other words: one quarter of Australians has the right to dual citizenship. The other three quarters do not.

The Australian government is "disposed" to repeal Section 17 of the Citizenship Act, but has made no final decision at this stage despite what has already been a lengthy review process. Now the government is calling for community comment in response to a discussion paper released on 8 June 2001 entitled "Loss of Australian Citizenship on the Acquisition of Another Citizenship". Comments are due by 6 July 2001. See the discussion paper at www.immi.gov.au/citizenship/0601paper/index.htm.

The Southern Cross Group believes that children like Zoe should always be part of Australia's future. The government should not be allowed to take away the citizenship of any more Australians. The message is simple for all Australians, whether they are at home or overseas: **All Australians should have the right to dual citizenship. Repeal Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act.**

See www.australiansabroad.com/oz/expats/discussion.cfm#AUTO to express support for the repeal of Section 17

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