

Two passports will be possible

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Australians will be able to become citizens of other countries without having to renounce their Australian citizenship.

After months of public consultation, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock has agreed to allow dual citizenship for Australians after receiving almost 800 submissions in favor of the change.

However the laws — which are expected to be passed during the spring session of Federal Parliament — will not be retrospective and Australians will continue to lose their citizenship until the changes occur.

Under current laws Australians cannot actively seek out and hold dual citizenship unless they have inherited it as a result of their country of origin, their parents or through marriage.

This means that many Australians living overseas who have sought citizenship of other countries for business, study or personal reasons have automatically lost their Australian citizenship.

The Australian Citizenship Council produced a report last year that urged the Federal Government to consider amending the anomaly.

Prominent Australians such as Nobel-prize winning scientist Peter Doherty have called for changes to the laws in the past.

Opposition Immigration spokesman Con Sciacca yesterday welcomed the changes and called for the Federal Government to allow former citizens to reapply for Australian citizenship without too much bureaucratic red tape.

A group representing hundreds of expatriates in America and Europe — the Southern Cross Group — called for the laws to be retrospective in its submission to the Federal Government last month.

The changes announced yesterday did not affect former citizens such as media magnate Rupert Murdoch as they were not retrospective, a spokesman for Mr Ruddock said.