

Laurie Ferguson MP
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MEDIA RELEASE

14 March 2002

PARLIAMENT APPROVES CITIZENSHIP CHANGES

The passage today of significant changes to the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 has been welcomed by the Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Laurie Ferguson MP.

'I know that many thousands of overseas Australians will particularly welcome the repeal of section 17 of the Act,' Mr Ferguson said.

'When given Assent, this change will mean that Australians will no longer be deprived of their citizenship if they take action after the age of 18 to acquire the citizenship of another country.

'With more and more Australians living and working overseas on an extended basis, hundreds of Australians every year have been losing their citizenship when they have acquired the citizenship of another country. Having publicly supported the repeal of section 17 since 1994, when I served on a landmark parliamentary inquiry into the matter, I warmly welcome today's decision.

'By repealing section 17 we are recognising that dual citizenship is an international reality and that the existing law was unfairly impacting on people who were born in Australia.

'The simplistic views of Liberal backbencher Alan Cadman MP, who described dual citizenship as repugnant, ignore this reality. The fact is that migrants to Australia have never been prevented by Australian law from retaining citizenship of their country of origin.

'The Opposition is disappointed that the Government was unwilling to review, as part of its Bill, the citizenship resumption requirements for those have previously lost their Australian citizenship.

'Given the repeal of section 17, these resumption arrangements are now clearly outmoded. The Opposition will maintain the pressure on Minister Hardgrave to face up to this issue in the coming months, Mr Ferguson concluded.

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