



Gary Hardgrave MP

Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
Media Release H13/2002 - 11 February 2002

Australian Citizenship Bill Introduced

The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Gary Hardgrave, will introduce a Bill into Parliament this week to amend the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*, which includes repeal of section 17 of the Act.

If the Bill is passed, Australians who acquire the citizenship of another country, after the Bill receives Royal Assent, will no longer lose their Australian citizenship.

"This provision of the legislation is outdated, particularly given the large number of Australians working and living overseas and the reality of global labour markets," Mr Hardgrave said.

"Repeal of section 17 will allow the growing number of internationally mobile Australians to take advantage of opportunities in other countries while retaining their links with Australia. This will also encourage Australians overseas to more easily bring their skills and experience home, creating jobs and contributing to their great country."

Mr Hardgrave said the proposed change would bring Australia into line with the citizenship practices of many countries including the UK, Canada, New Zealand, USA, France and Italy. The UK has allowed dual citizenship for 50 years.

Mr Hardgrave said the Bill also included initiatives for young Australians, for example:

- descent and resumption provisions will be extended to give young people more time to acquire Australian citizenship (raising the age limit from 18 to 25); and
- children who take out Australian citizenship with their parents will be given their own citizenship certificate.

The Bill also strengthens the integrity of the citizenship process. One example is the inclusion of a 'good character' requirement for people aged 18 and over who seek Australian citizenship by descent, or who seek to resume Australian citizenship.

"Currently some 4.4 million mainly overseas-born Australians have dual citizenship. More Australians may seek dual citizenship but don't because they do not want to forfeit their Australian citizenship," Mr Hardgrave said.

"The great majority of these are Australian-born. This bill will allow Australian-born descendants who qualify for citizenship of another country such as Britain, Ireland or Italy, to have the same access as those born overseas. In addition, 600-700 Australians living and working overseas forfeit their Australian citizenship each year when they take out the citizenship of another country. We don't want this to continue to happen."

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