

Gary Hardgrave MP

Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

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Australian Citizenship Bill to Become Law

The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Gary Hardgrave, announced today that the Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 has successfully passed through both Houses of Parliament without amendment.

The Bill, which contains a number of significant amendments to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* (the Act), including repeal of section 17, will now be sent to the Governor General for Royal Assent.

"The Government has a firm belief in the importance and value of Australian citizenship", Mr Hardgrave said. "It is fitting, therefore, that one of my first tasks as the first ever Commonwealth Minister for Citizenship was to reintroduce the Bill when Parliament resumed in February 2002."

"Once this Bill receives Royal Assent, Australian citizens who, from that date, acquire the citizenship of another country will be able to retain their Australian citizenship". Mr Hardgrave said.

Mr Hardgrave cautioned people considering taking out the citizenship of another country in the near future, to be aware that repeal of section 17 will not become law and take effect until the Bill receives Royal Assent. "Australians who acquire another citizenship before the Bill receives Royal Assent will continue to lose their Australian citizenship" he said.

Mr Hardgrave said that repeal of section 17 would not apply retrospectively. "However, the law will continue to provide for people who lost Australian citizenship under section 17 to apply to resume their Australian citizenship".

The Bill also contains a number of enhancements to citizenship legislation in the interests of young people, as well as measures to strengthen the integrity of the citizenship process. These, and other amendments in the Bill, will take effect from 1 July 2002.

In announcing the Bill's passage through Parliament, Mr Hardgrave acknowledged the contribution that many people, including the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Philip Ruddock, and the Australian Citizenship Council, had made to the review of Australia's citizenship law and policy.

"I would also to thank the Southern Cross Group, Australians Abroad and the many thousands of Australians who sent their views and made contributions to the debate," Mr Hardgrave said.

Further information on the Bill is available on the Australian Citizenship website www.citizenship.gov.au/bill3.htm.

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