

# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Gary Hardgrave MP**  
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600  
Telephone: (02) 6277 7890  
Facsimile: (02) 6273 0434

## CHANGES TO CITIZENSHIP LAWS

The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Gary Hardgrave, says that following Royal Assent Australian citizens will now be able to acquire the citizenship of another country without losing their Australian citizenship.

“I have been notified that the Governor General has signed the Citizenship Legislation Amendment Bill 2002, including the repeal of section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*,” Mr Hardgrave said.

‘Around 600-700 people come to the notice of my department each year as having lost Australian citizenship when they become citizens of another country. The new legislation means that the growing number of internationally mobile Australians can take advantage of opportunities in other countries while retaining their links with Australia.’

“This provision of the legislation was outdated, particularly given the large number of Australians overseas and the reality of global labour markets.

“This change will bring Australia into line with the citizenship practices of many countries including the UK, Canada, New Zealand, USA, France and Italy.

“This will ensure that our citizenship laws are modern and relevant to the Australian community and help to strengthen the integrity of Australia’s citizenship law.”

The Minister explained that the repeal of section 17 would not apply retrospectively. However, the law would continue to provide for people who lost Australian citizenship under section 17 prior to April 4, the date of Royal Assent, to apply to resume their Australian citizenship.

The repeal of section 17 followed widespread community consultation during the past few years, undertaken by the Australian Citizenship Council and more recently by the Government through the release of a discussion paper.

Mr Hardgrave said the Bill also included initiatives for young people, including raising the age limit for citizenship by descent and resumption from 18 to 25 to give them more time to acquire Australian citizenship.

“The Bill will strengthen the integrity of the citizenship process,” Mr Hardgrave said.

“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.”

These and other amendments, apart from the repeal of section 17, will take effect from 1 July 2002.

April 9, 2002

Media Contact: Amanda Lynch on 0419 123862

H36/2002