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The Hon Gary Hardgrave MP,
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

14th March 2003

Dear Mr Hardgrave,

I am sorry that I was unable to attend the London Affirmation ceremony on 20th February and was, thus, unable to speak to you personally. I subsequently spoke to Ms Anne MacGregor of the Southern Cross Group and she suggested that I should write to you direct with my case.

I am not presently an Australian Citizen because when I grew up in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s I firmly believed that I was an Australian citizen. I emigrated to Australia, at the age of ten, in 1949 with my parents from Scotland and spent some sixteen years there including the majority of my formative years. When I was planning my first trip to the UK in 1964 I contacted the Department of Immigration in Brisbane and enquired about a passport, I was told, no doubt in good faith, that I was eligible for either an Australian passport or a UK one but if I wanted to work in the UK it would be advantageous to have a UK passport. I took that advice. In 1966 I was offered a lectureship in London and again enquired about my situation when I would wish to return to Australia. I was told that there would be no problems as I had lived there so long. On neither occasion was I told that I needed to register as an Australian citizen. The lack of this piece of advise has meant that I have not been able to return to Australia as a permanent resident. The need to register does not seem to have been conveyed to UK migrants in the 1950s, certainly, when I later asked them, neither of my parents nor any of their migrant friends had known anything about it. By 1966 over 99% of UK immigrants in Australia had **not** registered. As late as 1970 the then Australian Minister for Immigration, Philip Lynch admitted that there was much confusion over the citizenship status of immigrants from the UK.

Would be possible for Australia to rectify this anomaly and allow Australian Citizenship or permanent residency for those of us who arrived in Australia as children and who lived there for a long period and who left prior to 1974 (the year registration ended) firmly believing that we were Australian citizens? The numbers affected would, by now, be fairly small and financial, health and character conditions could be attached similar to those of a Retirement Visa except that it would not be restricted to four years. It would be a win, win situation for Australia - residents with income derived from abroad, spending their money in Australia, paying their taxes there and not making any claims on Social Security. A substantial bond could be required to be paid to cover health care (similar to that payable by elderly parents).

It seems very unfair that, after so long in Australia, where I grew up and went through the “rites of passage” that I cannot return to Brisbane (which I still consider to be my “home town”) to live and where, despite now being retired, I cannot play a full part in the life of the city through voluntary activity (I currently do some 20 hours of voluntary service per week).

I grew up in what is now your constituency (Coopers Plains) and attended Brisbane State High School. I left school at fifteen and immediately started work. I attended the, then, Central Technical College (now QUT) in the evenings for six years and qualified as an architect, whilst working full time. I continued to work as such until I left for the UK. (over ten years working). I registered for National Service in 1957 but was not selected as the ballot system had just come into force. I have paid frequent visits “home” to Brisbane and have, over the years, saved Australia considerable foreign exchange in feeding and accommodating my friends, their children and now their grandchildren here in London!

Prior to leaving Australia to take up the lectureship in 1966, I renewed my driving licence and over the years, until my final retirement last year, I have remained registered as an architect in Queensland, paying my annual roll fee. I am a Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and have maintained this by annual subscription over all my years here. I think that this shows that had I been told that I needed to register as an Australian citizen in 1966 I would most certainly have done so.

I do currently hold a Retirement visa (class 410) but, as you know, this provides only for temporary residence up to four years and there are even restrictions imposed on the purchase of a home if it has been previously occupied. I get no special concessions in respect of all my years in Australia.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would consider my case and allow people in my position to become the Australian Citizens we believed we were.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Young', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Michael Young
Dip Arch (Qld), Msc (Lon), FRAIA, RIBA