



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Laurie Ferguson, MP

B.Ec. (Syd) M.A. (Syd)
Federal Member for Reid
Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs

16 October 2003

Mr Michael Young
18 Westleigh Ave
Putney SW15 6RD
UNITED KINGDOM

Dear Mr Young

Thank you for your recent note. I apologise deeply for our lack of response to your original letter of 20th May. The failure to reply is an aberration, as I prefer that my staff and I respond swiftly to all correspondence.

I sought clarification from the Parliamentary Library about the situation regarding UK and other Commonwealth citizens in the period you refer to. A copy of their advice is enclosed for your information. This shows that between 1948 and 1973 eligible British citizens, and those from certain other Commonwealth countries, could essentially register as Australian citizens if they met certain relatively benign requirements. A separate notification arrangement was also in place between 1969 and 1973, with slightly more onerous requirements. The Act was then amended to require all applicants for Australian citizenship to meet the same basic requirements.

Whilst I understand your plight, the reality is that there were particular provisions that governed access to citizenship during this period. I would find it difficult to justify ignoring the stipulations of the time on the basis that people were not certain of the exact requirements. As well I have no way of calculating how many other people may have been in a similar situation as you.

Nevertheless I concede that the outcome was unfortunate for those who had a potential entitlement but did not manage to exercise it. In Opposition I do not have the resources or access to the records that would enable me to get to the bottom of the matter. My party has already stated that it would reactivate the independent Australian Citizenship Council to promote Australian citizenship and monitor current citizenship legislation and policy. The most I can promise at this stage is that the matter that you raise could be one of the anomalies about which we would seek the Council's advice.

Yours faithfully

Laurie Ferguson MP
Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

Encl.



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