

Southern Cross Group
Letter to the Editor of the *Times of Malta*, 15 September 2004

Dear Sir,

I must strongly take issue with misleading information reported by you in today's newspaper regarding forthcoming changes to Australian citizenship law, in your article "Australian Citizenship Law Implications Explained" (15/9/04)

It is correct that Australian law will be amended (probably in 2005) to allow approximately 2,000 Australian-born people in Malta to apply to resume their renounced Australian citizenship - thereby allowing them to become dual citizens.

It is however NOT YET CLEAR whether children born to these people, after the date Australian citizenship was renounced by the Australian-born parent, will also have access to Australian citizenship as part of this batch of planned reforms, or ever. Contrary to your report, there is currently NO legal way for these children to obtain Australian citizenship (short of migrating to Australia and seeking naturalisation after fulfilling residency requirements).

The Australian Department of Immigration has admitted on the record, as part of hearings in a Senate Inquiry in Canberra, that the reforms announced by the Australian Citizenship Minister on 7 July 2004 specifically DO NOT encompass the children of Australian-born Maltese. It seems that these children as a group were inadvertently overlooked by the Department, although most would agree that it is a matter of common sense that Australian-born Maltese people in many cases will have had children since they renounced their citizenship.

Our organisation, the Southern Cross Group, an international advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora, is currently campaigning to convince the Australian government that children of Australian-born Maltese SHOULD be included in the forthcoming legislative changes. The bill to amend the law concerned is still on the drawing board and has not yet been tabled in Parliament. Our website carries a full explanation. Those who want to support our lobbying efforts regarding children can send an e-mail to the Minister from this address:

<http://www.southern-cross-group.org/malta/overview.html>

In a nutshell: we hope very much that children will be covered at the end of the day, but it is not a foregone conclusion by any means at this stage. Any Australian-born Maltese person reading this who has children that they want to have access to Australian citizenship should log on to our website and e-mail Canberra.

Citizenship law is a highly complicated area and it is essential that people affected by this matter have access to timely and absolutely precise information. Misinformation can lead to huge confusion and in some cases, even personal detriment.

The complete story on these reforms as they specifically affect Australian-born Maltese and their children is on our website. Anyone directly affected by this matter and unclear as to how the changes will affect them should feel free to call our volunteer SCG co-ordinator in Malta, Norman Bonello, mobile 79 468 329, norman@southern-cross-group.org, or myself in Brussels, mobile +32 474 950 131, anne@southern-cross-group.org at any time.

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