



«Title» «Givenname» «Surname»
«House_Number_Street»
«SuburbTown» «State_orTerritory» «Postcode»
AUSTRALIA

30 December 2005

Dear «Title» «Surname»

Please Help 3000 Children in Malta to Become Australian Citizens!

Ghin 3000 tifel u tifla f'Malta jsiru Cittadini Awstraljani

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) is a global volunteer-run and volunteer-funded advocacy and support organisation for the some one million Australians who live outside Australia. It is in no way affiliated with any political party and is purely issue-driven. The SCG is best known for its lobbying efforts in the area of Australian citizenship law reform. Our website (www.southern-cross-group.org) provides an overview of our activities.

Your friend/relative «Name_providedby» in Malta passed on your contact details to us. We are taking the liberty of writing to you in the hope that you will be able to support us in a very special campaign we are currently engaged in which concerns a number of Australian-born individuals today living in Malta and their Maltese-born children. You may have seen recent Australian media coverage of this issue. **«Name_providedby» is directly impacted.**

As you will know, many Maltese migrated to Australia in the 20th century, particularly in the years following World War II. Most families remained in Australia, but some returned to Malta after some time in Australia, taking their Australian-born minor children with them. Those Australian-born children were Australian citizens by birth under Australian law, and Maltese citizens by descent under Maltese law. However, until February 2000, Maltese law did not allow a person to retain two citizenships in adulthood. Approximately 2,000 Australian-born individuals were therefore forced to formally renounce their Australian citizenship at the Australian High Commission in Malta before they turned 19 in order to retain their Maltese citizenship as adults. This heart wrenching step was unavoidable because life in Malta without Maltese citizenship would have been very difficult, if not impossible. They would not have had access to free tertiary education or social security benefits, and would have needed work and residency permits to continue their lives in Malta as Australian citizens. Moving back to Australia as teenagers without their immediate families was for most out of the question for purely financial reasons.

Although both Australia and Malta now embrace dual citizenship as a matter of policy, under Australian law at present, there is currently no mechanism available for these people to resume their Australian citizenship if they are over the age of 25. We are pleased to report that after a long battle, the Australian Government has decided to allow these people to rejoin the Australian family. The *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* was tabled in the House of Representatives by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs John Cobb MP on 9 November 2005. Under this legislation once it is enacted and comes into force, approximately 2,000 people in Malta who were born in Australia will have the right to apply to resume their Australian citizenship. They will then be dual citizens. This is clearly very good news.

However, these Australian-born people between them have approximately 3,000 children, born to them in Malta after they renounced their Australian citizenship. The average age of these children is 10½. We would like these children to have access to Australian citizenship as well. If their parents had still been Australian citizens at the time of their birth, these children would be Australian citizens by descent today under Australian law.

We feel that the Government's specific exclusion of this group of children from access to Australian citizenship under the proposed legislation is unjust and indeed discriminatory. **The children of another similar group of former Australian citizens have been included in the Bill.** Until April 2002, Australians who voluntarily acquired another citizenship, i.e. those who were naturalised overseas, automatically forfeited their Australian citizenship under Australian law. Unlike Australian-born individuals in Malta, those people did not have to make a formal renunciation. But, just like those in Malta, after they lost their Australian citizenship many of them went on to have children overseas, and their children will now be provided with access to Australian citizenship.

Both groups of children are the innocent victims of old laws that existed to prohibit dual citizenship, crafted at a time when the world was not the global village it is today. We believe that it is inappropriate for the Government to distinguish between them now merely on the basis of how their parents lost Australian citizenship years ago.

You can help - in two ways.

Please turn over

The *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* will be debated and voted upon by both the House of Representatives and the Senate in early 2006. We note that your local Federal Member of Parliament is a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). You will be pleased to learn that the ALP has given us an undertaking that it will introduce an Opposition amendment in both the House and the Senate to have Maltese children included. However, with the Government having a majority in both the House and the Senate, there is no guarantee at this stage that the amendment will be accepted and adopted as part of the final legislation.

First: Please make a short submission to the special Senate Inquiry asking that Maltese children be included in the Bill.

At the initiative of the Australian Democrats, the Senate has referred the Bill to a special Inquiry, to be handled by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee. Submissions to that Inquiry must be made by the deadline of **Monday 16 January 2006**.

If you have internet access, an inquiry submission can be made simply and quickly through the SCG website:

http://www.southern-cross-group.org/citizenship_bill/make_submission.html

If you don't have internet access, then we enclose a short submission form which is simple to complete, as well as an envelope with the Senate Committee's return address in Canberra on it.

Second: Please write and tell the Minister for Citizenship that you want Maltese children to be provided with access to Australian citizenship under the legislation.

We enclose a basic letter that you can use for this purpose, as well as an envelope with the Minister's address already on it. All you have to do is fill in your name and contact details at the top of the letter and sign it at the bottom. If you have a personal message for the Minister, there is a space at the bottom of the letter for this. If you would like to download the basic letter as a Word document which you can further amend and personalise yourself, or pass on to friends and family to use, it is available from our website at:

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

Questions?

The SCG's volunteer co-ordinator for Australia is available in Canberra to help if you have questions or comments or require further information:

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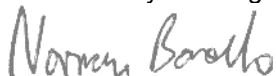
Alternatively, please contact us in Malta directly by e-mail:

Norman Bonello
norman@southern-cross-group.org

Mario Schembri
mario@southern-cross-group.org

On behalf of all affected families in Malta, we would like to express to you our sincere appreciation in advance for taking the time to support us in this matter.

With our very best regards,



Norman Bonello and Mario Schembri
SCG Volunteer Co-ordinators for Malta

