

Goodbye nation-state, hello global playground

Recent events in the Middle East have inspired savage attacks on the notion of dual citizenship. But **Fiona Carruthers** suggests citizens of the world are the globalised future.

Images of Lebanese Australians wailing at the border as the Australian government scrambles to secure transport out of war-torn Lebanon jar with those of the funeral of a young Australian Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon as he willingly performed military service for Israel. They seem at odds with the idea of multiculturalism, that cornerstone of a modern, pluralistic Australia.

Over the past couple of weeks, the image of dual citizens has taken a beating. Many across middle Australia did not miss the opportunity to query why anyone who becomes an "Aussie" would even want to hold more than one passport and, inherent in that act, split their loyalty and time between two nation states.

On the other side of the fence, our leading academic minds in the field of migration, citizenship and the relatively new discipline of "human geography" have been working over time to resurrect the image of dual passport holders as cosmopolitan and desirable in their ability to move easily between borders with valuable cultural knowledge, as well as a long list of dual business contacts tucked neatly between their dual passports.



"The really important thing is to use the skills of dual citizens strategically for Australia's benefit, not treat them like a fifth column or enemy within," Macquarie University human geography lecturer Melissa Butcher says.

Australian National University immigration analyst James Jupp agrees, saying tabloid media polls reflecting that the overwhelming majority of readers thought Lebanese Australian dual citizens should not receive Australian consular assistance were damaging in the extreme.

"It's all a load of nonsense," says Jupp, declaring a bias because he is a dual citizen (United Kingdom). "The idea you can only wear one colour jersey is infantile politics. I find it very hard to understand how you could question the 'loyalty' of Lebanese Australians. It's whipping up a storm: Lebanese Australians are perfectly entitled to ask Australia to protect them."

Even the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs was yawning. "We don't keep figures on dual citizens, but it would be in the order of about 5 million or so among Australia's population of 20.3 million," a departmental spokesman told *The Australian Financial Review*. He estimated that most dual citizens in Australia would hold second passports with the UK and New Zealand, adding: "There's simply no way of knowing as we don't keep that sort of data."

He says that as of June last year, 4.8 million Australians were born overseas: 1.5 million were born in north-west Europe (including the UK, France and Germany); 834,957 were born in south-east Europe (including Italy, Greece and Portugal) and 613,995 were born in South-East Asia.

The Business Council of Australia points out that many of our leading chief executives are dual passport holders or were born overseas. Think American-born Chip Goodyear (BHP Billiton) and Kirby Adams (BlueScope); Scottish-born John Stewart (National Australia Bank) and South African emigre Gail Kelly (St George Bank).

More and more governments are beginning to accept that allowing their citizens to hold more than one passport is a necessity in a world driven by globalisation.

So are dual citizens really so scary? And why do they have Australia up in arms?

One thing is certain: those with dual passports are among our most cutting edge citizens, who are simply ahead of the times.

Adelaide University demographer Graeme Hugo says: "With the changes that have occurred over the past 20 years or so in terms of people moving a lot more, being totally

committed to a single nation state is not compatible with globalisation. Increasing numbers of people have allegiances to a number of countries now."

He points out that more than 900,000 Australians reside overseas at any given time, although again it is difficult to know how many hold two or more passports versus how many are on foreign work visas or sponsored by a company.

Butcher agrees: "We need to keep rethinking the whole citizenship thing now," she says. "The nation state is no longer the final domain of identity or belonging."

"Whole groups of people, including many Australian business people, are now 'transmigrants'," she says, adding she is a dual citizen with an EU passport. "Whether they have more than one passport or not, transmigrants spend up to six months of the year constantly moving between countries."

Hugo says that while data is scant, it's clear that Greeks and Italians like to spend a lot of time in their countries of birth, particularly during retirement, while Australians with Asian links tend to do regular business trips back to their country of origin throughout their working lives. "The reality is whether they have two passports or not, people want to maintain links with their cultural heritage," he says.

Dual passports are also used when countries run out of work. Hugo points to the South American experience of the 1980s. When economies began to go bad, particularly for Argentina, which had a large Spanish population, those who could moved temporarily back to Spain in search of work.

"One clear trend worldwide is utilising second passports to cope with changing political/economic environments," Hugo says.

He points to a 2004 paper — *Indian Information Technology Professionals' World System* by Xiang Biao — which looked at the behaviours of Indian-born technology graduates who gained Australian residency, moved to work in Australia for a few years before going on to Silicon Valley in the United States or Canada.

"Building a secure base in Australia or Canada does not make [Indian] workers less mobile," Biao's paper says. "On the contrary, permanent resident status in these countries is highly regarded partly because it makes further mobility easier."

Rather than judging whether or not dual citizens make the best citizens, Hugo, Butcher and Jupp unite in saying countries are better

TAKE TWO

A few of the nations that recognise dual citizenship

Australia
Canada
Finland
France
Greece
India
Ireland
Netherlands
New Zealand

Portugal
Republic of
Cyprus
Sweden
Switzerland
United
Kingdom
United States
of America



advised to get with the times and learn to live with it. Hugo says: "Countries with big emigrant populations, such as Ireland, the Philippines and Italy, tend to be the best at recognising dual citizenship simply because they have had to in order to maintain ties with many of their citizens who leave for opportunities overseas."

Some countries are moving faster than others to make it easier for their citizens and dual citizens to conduct their personal banking and tax affairs. Butcher says some banks in India now offer special accounts that are better tailored to the needs of the constantly moving global citizen.

"The Indians are being very strategic about how they use their offshore business community," she says.

Part of Australia's reticence about the idea of dual citizenship is that it was only permitted from 2002. Before that, people wishing to take out another form of citizenship had to relinquish their Australian passport. One of

the most famous cases of this was when media mogul Rupert Murdoch became an American citizen for business purposes in 1985.

Hugo says the key point that dual citizenship bashers should keep in mind is the change of Australian law came about largely as a result of Australians living abroad — particularly in the US — who desperately wanted to take out a second passport without having to relinquish their Australian passport. They even formed a lobby group, known as the Southern Cross Group.

Another barrier to winning consensus for dual citizens can be a simple issue of semantics. Jupp explains that the UK was always more predisposed to dual citizens thanks to its approach to labelling its people. "The British government has never cared whether you have two or four or eight passports," Jupp says. "They work on the basis that their people are British subjects not British citizens. The fact you are a British subject is all that matters. Beyond that, you can do what you like."

Hugo agrees the UK has always been more relaxed. "The tenet of the old nation state was that you owed allegiance to your state. But that is now a moot point. If you want to be a global country with strong links to other parts of the world, allowing people to hold multiple passports is really a key part of that."

"What will become really interesting is whether second and third generations born in Australia wish to maintain similarly strong linkages."