

## **Aussie war brides see citizenship delays**

Sunday 1 July 2007, 17:54 AEST

By Peter Mitchell

Hundreds of elderly Australian war brides in the US hoping to apply on Sunday to reclaim their Australian citizenship were left disappointed, but only for a day.

The women, aged in their 80s and 90s, had circled Sunday on their calendars as the first day they could apply to reclaim Australian citizenship when the forms would appear on the website.

Ken Lankard, who has worked with a group which represents Australian expatriates, said the group had understood the forms would be available on the government's citizenship website from midnight Sunday (AEST) when the new act came into law.

"For the women, it's like being a kid and waking up on Christmas morning and finding out that Santa Claus didn't come," Mr Lankard, whose 83-year-old Los Angeles-based mother, Nancy, is keen to reclaim her citizenship, told AAP.

With many of the women in their 80s and 90s, they want to apply as soon as possible.

"I checked the website first thing this morning at 7am, which would have been midnight Australia time and there was nothing," Mr Lankard said.

However, a spokeswoman for Immigration and Citizenship Minister Kevin Andrews said the forms appeared on the government website around midday on Sunday (AEST).

With the time difference, it was the evening in the US, past 10pm on the east coast, so many of the war brides were asleep or unaware.

About 15,000 war brides left Australia after World War II.

They met US servicemen stationed in Australia during war, fell in love, and moved to the US with their new husbands.

Many, like Mrs Lankard, became American citizens, but did not realise they would lose their Australian citizenship.

She found out she wasn't legally an Aussie a few years ago.

The new Australian Citizenship Act 2007, which came into force on July 1, allows the war brides and their children to apply to regain their Australian citizenship.

Applicants in the US need to fill out the forms and send them to the Australian embassy in Washington DC.



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