

Citizenship regained

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This year's Australian Citizenship Day was a very special one for 58 Maltese who had to renounce their Australian citizenship after their return to Malta.



Following changes in legislation in both Malta and Australia, all those who held a dual Maltese-Australian citizenship and had renounced one on their 19th birthday, can now resume the abandoned citizenship.

Australian High Commissioner Jurek Juszczuk handed the certificate of Australian citizenship to 31 people at his residence at San Pawl tat-Targa, Naxxar. These seemed highly elated, some of them telling this newspaper that they had been eagerly waiting this day for years.

He said 17 September – Australian Citizenship Day – was an opportunity to take pride in Australian citizenship and to reflect on the meaning and importance of being Australian. These sentiments, he said, struck a responsive chord in many of the individual Maltese Australians he has met in the year since he took up his post. He quoted an interview carried on TMIS with a second-generation Maltese-Australian, Shaun Bonnett, who affirmed that growing up as an Australian, he was encouraged to be proud of his heritage and at the same time be a proud Australian.

Since changes in legislation took place, the high commissioner said, his office received 1,300 enquires in the month of July only, while about 500 people attended its information sessions held in Malta and Gozo.

Mr Juszczuk said the number of people of Maltese ancestry in Australia is estimated at over 150,000 and over 70 per cent of the Malta-born population has taken up Australian citizenship.

He praised the Maltese community which has contributed greatly to the development of a multicultural Australia, as well as the strong bilateral relationship which includes agreements covering social security, double taxation, health, air services and a working holiday scheme.

Mr Juszczuk described Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi's visit to Australia last month and the visit to Malta by an Australian parliamentary delegation as another high-level demonstration of political commitment to the bilateral relationship.