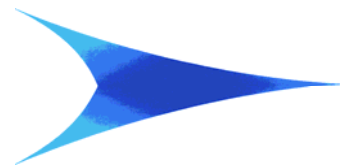


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



MEDIA RELEASE

Cellist in Canada to Resume Citizenship

Barbara Armstrong unwittingly lost her Australian citizenship in 1982 when she became a naturalised Canadian citizen. But from this Sunday, 1 July 2007, she is eligible to apply to resume her citizenship on the commencement of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*.

Born in Australia in 1959, Barbara and her two sisters grew up in Ferntree Gully in Melbourne, Germany, New Zealand and then Canada. Her Hungarian-born father was a modern history professor and his studies and university appointments took the family around the globe.

A talented musician who excels at the cello, in her early twenties Barbara found that her musical career in Canada would be hampered if she were not Canadian.

"In 1982 I decided I should apply for Canadian citizenship", says Barbara. "I wanted to vote in the country in which I lived as well, and participate fully in Canadian society."

But Barbara was not aware that she would immediately and automatically lose her Australian citizenship on becoming Canadian. She assumed at the time that she could be a dual citizen.

It was only several years later that Barbara learned she was no longer an Australian citizen. "In 1993 we went home to Australia to visit my very elderly grandmother", she says. "I had to get a visa to get into the country of my birth. It really galled me."

"These legislative reforms are long overdue", says Barbara. "Finally, Australia is starting to acknowledge that many Australians live large parts of their lives outside Australia for all sorts of very valid reasons. They contribute from offshore and are important unofficial ambassadors for the country. Living in Australia is not the only way to be a committed Australian."

Citizenship for Adopted Daughter Not So Simple



John and Barbara Armstrong with daughter Christine.

Barbara and her husband John have one daughter, Christina, 13, adopted in Canada as a baby. Barbara dearly wants Christina to have Australian citizenship. But because Christina is adopted, and Barbara is not her natural mother, and because the 1993 adoption did not happen under the laws of Australia but under the laws of Canada, Christina's route to Australian citizenship is extremely cumbersome and very expensive.

Barbara has to first resume Australian citizenship herself. There will be an AU\$65 filing fee for the resumption application. Then she can sponsor Christina for a dependent child migrant visa for Australia. That will set her back a further AU\$1390 in filing fees. Once the visa is granted (following medicals, etc), Barbara will be able to apply for discretionary grant of Australian citizenship for Christina under the new *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*. That application will cost an additional AU\$120. To the total filing fees of AU\$1575 must be added the cost of obtaining the required supporting documentation for all three applications, local police clearances charges, courier costs and other sundry expenses.

In contrast, if Christina were the natural-born child of Barbara, it would cost the family only AU\$120 to apply for Australian citizenship by conferral for her and Barbara would not have to get her Australian citizenship back first. And if Barbara was Christina's natural mother and had still been an Australian citizen when Christina was born in Canada, it would cost only AU\$110 for an Australian citizenship by descent application.

"Australian-born expats who adopt while they live abroad under the laws of their country of residence get a raw deal citizenship-wise for their adopted children", says Robyn Stephenson, the SCG's North American Coordinator. "The new *Australian Citizenship Act* does simplify matters where the adoption occurs under the *Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions*, but none of the adoption cases the SCG has handled to date in the Australian diaspora fall under that Convention."

"If the adopted child is still under 18, there is a way to obtain Australian citizenship for him or her, but it is not widely understood, and it is very time consuming and expensive. If the adopted child is already 18 or over, there is no route to Australian citizenship at all. The SCG has made representations about these problems over a number of years, but so far they have fallen on deaf ears in Canberra. The fact remains that the majority of Australian expatriates who adopt abroad continue to be discriminated against on Australian citizenship vis-à-vis other Australian families."

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About the Southern Cross Group

The Southern Cross Group is an international non-profit volunteer-run advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora. Since its formation in early 2000, the SCG has established a consistent track record of intelligent and timely submissions to Government on a host of Australian expatriate issues. The Group is best known for its work in reforming Australian citizenship law. It has also been active on the issue of expatriate disenfranchisement in the Australian electoral process, and was the driving force behind the establishment of a broad-based dedicated Australian Senate Committee Inquiry into Australian expatriates held in 2003-2005.

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29 June 2007