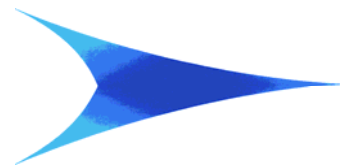


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



MEDIA RELEASE

Vietnam War Bride to Resume Australian Citizenship

Sydney-born Linda Nowak in Maryland USA is looking forward to Sunday 1 July so that she can apply to resume her lost Australian citizenship. That's the day that the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* commences.

With ANZAC Day as her birthday, Linda's life story has been intertwined with men in uniform. She met her first husband Wayne, a US soldier fighting in the Vietnam War, in Sydney in April 1969.

"It was back in the days of the Whiskey-a-Go-Go", Linda recalls. "I was a wannabe hippy chick from Kogarah and he was a buttoned down, wing tip shoe-wearing soldier boy from Maryland. I was 20 and he was 21. We met on a cruise on Sydney Harbour."

Wayne was not backward in coming forward. On the cruise boat that night, he walked straight up to Linda and said, "Hello! My name is Wayne and I am going to marry you!"

"What a line!", says Linda. "I thought he must have been suffering from combat fatigue!"

The pair subsequently spent four days going to the movies, having dinner and dancing in nightclubs together until Wayne had to return to Vietnam. Afterwards, they wrote to each other every day. Eventually, Wayne sent Linda a ticket to travel to the United States.

Linda's mother insisted that it was a return ticket. "Just as well as it turned out", says Linda. "We ended up cashing in the return part of the ticket to pay for our wedding".

The couple enjoyed a happy marriage in Maryland and had three children, Keira Lynne, Wayne Jr. and Melissa Lee. In September 1978 Linda became a naturalized US citizen, thereby forfeiting her Australian citizenship under Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*. She felt at the time that it was something she had to do, concerned that if her husband ever died or they broke up while the children were minors, she might lose them.



Linda with daughters Keira and Melissa.

With a young family, Linda only managed to get back to Australia twice for visits in her first twenty years away, although her mother and sister visited her in the States several times. In the last decade, her trips back to Australia have been more frequent. "Each time it is harder to leave again", she says.

Wayne passed away twelve years ago, and then Linda lost Wayne Jr. at the young age of 27 in 2002. Sadly, her second husband also died, a victim of lung cancer, just a few months later. But the family celebrated daughter Melissa's wedding in Sydney in 2003 with a wonderful ceremony on the beach followed by a honeymoon on the Great Barrier Reef.

"My hope and dream is that with the regaining of my Australian citizenship I can move back to my homeland, the best country in the world, in the next four years or so and spend my future with my feet in the sand and a smile on my face." says Linda.

Now there's a new man in uniform in Linda's life, a gentleman in the Canadian Navy who has visited Australia many times over the years during his seafaring career. Rumour has it that he might just move to Australia with Linda.

The *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* is also good news for Linda's daughters Keira and Melissa, who become eligible on 1 July to apply for Australian citizenship by descent. Born in the US in the 1970s, they were never registered as Australian citizens by descent when they were born, although Linda was still an Australian citizen at the time of their births. Even if they had been registered as Australians as infants, they would have lost their Australian citizenship under Section 23 of the 1948 Act automatically as minors when Linda lost her citizenship in 1978 under Section 17.

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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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