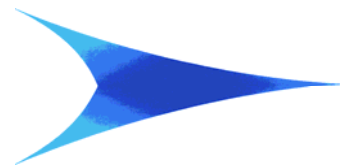


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



MEDIA RELEASE

Clive to Become Australian at Last

Bristol-born Clive Pillinger in Bath in the UK will be travelling to London on Monday 2 July to file his application for Australian citizenship by descent at Australia House in the Strand.

Now 62, the commencement of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* on 1 July marks the end of a long and emotional journey for Clive.

Clive's mother Laura was born in Subiaco in Perth in 1911. Today, children born abroad to an Australian-born Australian-citizen parent, either mother or father, may be registered as Australian citizens by descent. But until 1970, historical sex discrimination in Australian law meant that Australian-born women could not pass on their Australian citizenship to their overseas-born children. Such children had to have an Australian father.

From a young age, Clive always dreamed of going to Australia to live. A friend in his class at school when he was 16 migrated to Australia and came back for a visit to Bristol a few years later and was featured in the local newspaper. That stuck in Clive's mind and he always wanted to do the same as his old classmate. He left school to take up an apprenticeship and in due course became a signwriter.

In his early 20s, following his dream, Clive migrated to Australia as a "ten pound Pom". He arrived in Sydney by boat in 1968 and had no trouble finding work immediately as a signwriter. Being a big country music fan, he soon found his spare time filled with new friends of like mind.

"I was a bit of a country music groupie, really", he says. "I used to go to all of the Reg Lindsay shows in and around Sydney. It was really a wonderful time". Intrigued by the pedal steel guitar, Clive started taking guitar lessons from country music legend Pee Wee Clark who played in the Reg Lindsay band. He has also stayed in touch with Heather McKean, one of the famous McKean sisters, ever since.

In 1970 Clive left Australia to go back to the UK to visit his parents. On stopping in New Zealand on the way back to the UK, he realized he'd made a big mistake not getting a return visa for Australia before he left.

On arriving back in the UK, he started saving to go back to Australia. But circumstances intervened. He met Eileen, who became his wife, and he, Eileen and stepdaughter Sharon settled in Bath. It was only financially possible to return to Australia for a visit in 1988. Further visits followed in 1993 and 2005-2006.

Although Australian citizenship law was amended at various times over the years, Clive always seemed to fall between the cracks. A significant aspect of the problem was that he was born shortly before the entry into force of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* on 26 January 1949. Ironically, although a temporary fix for such individuals born abroad to Australian mothers was introduced into the 1948 Act as Section 11 in June 1991, Clive, like thousands of others overseas in the same situation, was ignorant of it and missed the five-year window for making an application. He had even visited the Australian High Commission in London in 1993 to obtain a visa to travel to Australia and a new passport for his mother, while Section 11 was operative, but was not informed by consular officials that he was eligible to apply for Australian citizenship by descent at that time.

Clive was also not covered by Section 10C of the 1948 Act when it was introduced from 1992. This provided for citizenship by descent for adults born in the period between 26 January 1949 and 15 January 1974. Having missed out under Section 11, Clive nevertheless applied for Australian citizenship by descent under Section 10C in 1999 despite the fact that he was born before 26 January 1949. His application was refused, and he appealed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, losing there too. The AAT concluded that the legislation produced what could "only be described as an arbitrary and unfortunate result".

The only hope for Clive following that experience was that in time common sense would prevail in Canberra and Australian citizenship law would be reformed.

“There were many times over the years when I felt very down about this and thought that it would never happen”, said Clive. “I want to thank the Southern Cross Group from the bottom of my heart for being unwavering for so long in their mission to drag Australian citizenship law into the 21st century and help people like me”, he said.

Similar to Clive, several thousand US-born children of World War II Australian war brides were also born before 26 January 1949 and will be entitled to apply for Australian citizenship by descent from 1 July 2007.

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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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