

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

2005-06 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

### (230) Output: 2.3 Australian Citizenship

Senator Hurley asked:

How many Australians have dual nationality at the moment since the amendment to the constitution 4th of April 2002?

*Answer:*

The circumstances which can lead to Australians having dual citizenship are as follows:

- When a person acquires Australian citizenship following migration to Australia, and the laws of the other country of citizenship allow for the retention of citizenship of that country.
- Where the laws of another country provide for an Australian citizen by birth to be registered as a citizen of that country, for example, because their Australian citizen or permanent resident parent is also a citizen of that country.
- When a person born overseas to an Australian citizen parent, is registered as an Australian citizen by descent, having acquired citizenship of the country of birth by virtue of birth in that country.
- When an Australian citizen acquires the citizenship of another country automatically as a result of the laws of that country, for example, by marriage or birth to a national of that country.
- When an Australian citizen under 18 years of age acquires another citizenship. Children under 18 years of age who acquired another citizenship in their own right were not affected by the former section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*.
- When a former Australian citizen who lost their Australian citizenship when they, or their parents, acquired the citizenship of another country resumes their Australian citizenship.
- Following resumption of Australian citizenship by a person who renounced their Australian citizenship, or lost their citizenship as a result of their parents' renunciation of citizenship.

There is no obligation on Australians to notify the Australian Government when or if they acquire the citizenship of another country, or what impact the acquisition of Australian citizenship has had on any other citizenship held at the time they became an Australian citizen. It is therefore not possible to provide a definitive figure on the number of Australian citizens who also hold the citizenship of another country.

A discussion paper issued by the Australian Government in June 2001, in the lead up to the repeal of Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* on 4 April 2002, stated that “Currently an estimated 4.4 million Australians possess a citizenship additional to their Australian citizenship.”

To put this figure into context, it is estimated that some 43% of people in Australia were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas. On the basis of the current population of almost 20.5 million, this suggests that some 8.8 million were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas and *may* therefore have access to another citizenship. The actual numbers of those with dual citizenship depends on the laws of the countries of birth of the individuals and their parents, and the extent to which people born in Australia have taken advantage of those laws. In addition, there are those born in Australia with no family connections to another country who otherwise qualify for the citizenship of another country, for example following a period of residence.

While a number of countries allow for their nationals to acquire the citizenship of another country there are many who do not. Examples of the former include the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Lebanon, France, Greece, Italy, Turkey and South Africa (provided application is made to retain that citizenship). Examples of the latter include China, Denmark, Fiji, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The department’s 2004-05 Annual Report at Appendix 2 *Citizenship Statistics* indicates that, in the period under review, around 39% of those who became citizens following migration to Australia were from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States, all of which allow dual citizenship. In the same period, around 25% of those who became Australians were from China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, none of which allow dual citizenship.

Between July 2001 and June 2005 around 345,600 people acquired Australian citizenship following migration to Australia, just over 51,000 people born overseas were registered as citizenship by descent, and almost 1900 former citizens resumed their Australian citizenship.