

Dear Senators

I endorse the intention of this Bill, and its recognition that today Australians live, work and start families all over the world, without losing their special bonds to this country.

It is particularly commendable that the Bill includes making it possible for former Australian citizens who lost their citizenship under Section 18 to resume it. However there's an unkind gap in the proposals, whereby the children of these individuals will have no access to citizenship after their parents have regained it. This places those parents who wish to re-settle in Australia in the painful position of having to leave their children behind.

I believe this is known as the "Maltese children" issue.

I am aware that in 2002 Section 17 was repealed, allowing former citizens who had lost their Australian citizenship through the acquisition of a second citizenship to resume their Australian one. My understanding is that this also applied to their children. It would be a great unfairness to extend this provision to people who were forced by their circumstances to renounce their Australian citizenship without also extending it to their children.

In addition to the bond they have to Australia through their parents, the children who fall into this category can be expected, as a group, to possess above average language and cross-cultural skills, increasing the likelihood that they will contribute greatly to Australia, both here and overseas.

I urge the Committee to recommend to the Parliament that it redress this piece of unfairness by extending the capacity to resume Australian citizenship not only to former citizens, but also to the so-called "Maltese children" cases.

Sincerely

Jim Woulfe
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