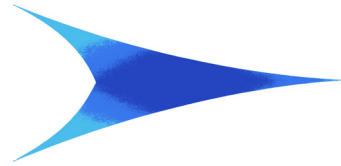# The Southern Cross Group
Promoting Mobility in the Global Community

Australian-born Maltese and their Children - Family Profiles

The Carabott Family

Five-year old Maltese-born **Daniel Carabott** has two parents who were born in Australia. But the Australian government's new *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* provides him with no entitlement to Australian citizenship.

Daniel's father Peter, born in Melbourne, and mother Joanne, born in Sydney, both 34, are both the children of post-war Maltese migrants to Australia.

The uniquely Australian Melbourne-Sydney rivalry is in evidence in Peter and Joanna's shared lives today in Malta as they bring up Daniel. The house they built together and now live in is called "Aussie", a long-discussed compromise after Peter wanted to call the home "Melbourne" and Joanne wanted to call it "Sydney".

Peter's parents migrated to Australia separately in the early 1960s, marrying in Australia in 1964. Three children were born to the couple, David in 1968, Peter in 1971 and Carmen in 1974. But just before Christmas 1975 the family returned to Malta, when Peter was 4. Peter's father sorely missed his country of birth and his livelihood as a fisherman.

Joanne, Daniel's mother, has a similar family history. Her parents met and married in Malta, migrating to Australia together in 1970. They returned to Malta with Joanne and her sister Carmen in 1978, when Joanne was 7 years old.

Daniel's parents Peter and Joanne were both dual citizens as children, being Australian by birth under Australian law and Maltese by descent under Maltese law. But in 1990, both Peter and Joanne had to renounce their Australian citizenship under Section 18 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*, just before they turned 19. Until February 2000, Maltese law prohibited dual citizenship in adulthood. Further education in Malta, access to government stipends, and many other benefits would not have been available to the two young people if they had decided to remain Australian citizens.

The couple is adamant that they are both still Australian, even if the law presently says they are not. "It's our birthright", says Peter, an IT teacher. "Those old policies which prevented dual citizenship at the time effectively meant our Australian citizenship was stolen from us when we were still kids."

His wife Joanne, a librarian, agrees. "It's only right that the Australian government should now put their end of it right" she says. They are both very pleased that the new Bill, once law, will enable them to apply to resume their Australian citizenship. But the Bill is only half a fix for the Carabott family.

Their son **Daniel** would have been Australian by descent if he'd had an Australian-citizen parent at the time of his birth in Malta in September 2000. Even once his parents become Australian again, he'll have no route to citizenship under the terms of the Bill in its present form. Any younger brothers and sisters born to Peter and Joanne after they resume citizenship will however be able to benefit from Australian citizenship.

If Daniel's parents had not lost their Australian citizenship under Section 18, but instead forfeited it under the now-repealed Section 17 on the acquisition of another citizenship, Australian citizenship would now be in sight for the youngster under the planned reforms. "I can't understand this distinction between innocent children purely based on the provision under which their parents lost citizenship", says Peter. "I just don't know how I'm going to explain it to Daniel when he's old enough to ask me why he can't be Australian too."

To contact Peter, Joanne and Daniel, call Anne MacGregor, Maltese mobile 9912 9912 (from early Wed 23/11/05), Belgian mobile 0032 474 950 131, or Norman Bonello, Maltese mobile 79 468 329, norman@southern-cross-group.org. Photos available.

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