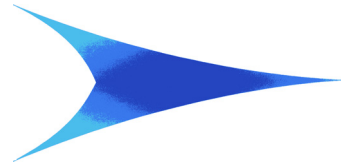


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



Australian-born Maltese and their Children - Family Profiles

The Calleja Family

28-year-old Sydney-born Maryanne Calleja wants Australian citizenship for her two-year-old Maltese-born daughter **Kelsey**. But the *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* as tabled by the Government on 9 November 2005 leaves Kelsey out.

Maryanne's parents migrated to Australia from Malta in the early 1970s, just after their marriage. They had three children in Australia, Frankie, in 1974, Maryanne in 1977, and Charlie in 1979. All three children enjoyed dual citizenship as minors, because they were Australian by birth under Australian law and Maltese by descent under Maltese law.

In 1993, when Maryanne was a teenager, her parents decided to move the family back to Malta.

Just before she turned 19, Maryanne was forced to renounce her Australian citizenship at the Australian High Commission in Malta. Until February 2000, Maltese law prohibited dual citizenship in adulthood.

Maryanne's decision to renounce her Australian citizenship was not one she took lightly. But at the age of 18 she wanted to pursue a career in education, and knew that she'd almost certainly end up working for the Maltese government, necessitating Maltese citizenship. Today, she works for a state school as a facilitator for children with disabilities.

"I was very angry about losing my Australian citizenship", she says, "and I'm still angry. I can't explain what's it's like. It's as if someone physically took hold of me and against my will made me turn my back on part of who I really am. If you grow up in Australia and live there until you're fifteen, like I did, it's just in you. Everything, the education, the wide open spaces, the way people deal with each other."

When the *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* becomes law, Maryanne will be able to apply for her Australian citizenship back. But Kelsey, who had no Australian-citizen parent at the time of her birth, will have no access to Australian citizenship. If Maryanne had never had to renounce, Kelsey would be Australian by descent today.

"Excluding Kelsey is just crazy", says Maryanne. "We're planning to have more kids, and since they'll in all likelihood be born after I resume my Australian citizenship, they'll be entitled to Australian citizenship by descent. But Kelsey won't. The Australian government's stance is going to create inequality between siblings."

But the new law is also going to create an inequality among families in the Australian diaspora in a broader sense. Children born to individuals who forfeited their Australian citizenship on the acquisition of another citizenship before April 2002, under the now-repealed Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*, are all being catered for in the Government's reforms. Kelsey's only crime is that her mother lost her citizenship under Section 18.

For now, that doesn't seem to stop the little girl happily tucking into Vegemite-smeared biscuits with her soon-to-be-Aussie-again Mum. And Maryanne's specially imported supply of Preen from Down Under comes in pretty handy to deal the with resulting brown paw-prints.

To contact Maryanne and her daughter Kelsey, 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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