

Mr. Anthony Camilleri

Date: 28-01-04

Dear Sir/madam,

I was born in Geelong, Melbourne in Australia on the 12th December 1964. My mother and father migrated to Australia from Malta in 1950. As a child I enjoyed dual citizenship: I was Australian by birth under Australian law and Maltese by descent under Maltese law. In 1968 when I was 4 years old, my family moved back to Malta. Under Maltese citizenship law I was required to decide between Maltese and Australian citizenship between my 18th and 19th birthdays. Prior to amendments which took effect on 10 February 2000, Maltese citizenship law did not allow dual citizenship in adulthood.

I was required by the Maltese citizenship authorities to present documentary evidence that I had formally renounced my Australian citizenship under Australian law using Section 18 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948, in order to keep my Maltese citizenship beyond my 19th birthday.

I opted to keep Maltese citizenship in adulthood to the fact that life in Malta for me without Maltese citizenship would have been extremely difficult. In particular it was difficult to find a job, access to free tertiary education only with Maltese citizenship, ability to purchase property in Malta, ability to qualify for subsidised housing and access to social security benefits etc.

At the time that I renounced my Australian citizenship I did so only because I felt compelled and essentially had no choice in the circumstances.

Australian citizenship is my birthright because I was born in Australia. I still maintain close ties with Australia in the following ways. I still have my sister and her family in Australia. My father returned back to Australia when my mother died and lived ~~in~~ with my sister.

The Australian Citizenship Act 1948 contains a provision whereby those who lost their Australian citizenship under the now repealed Section 17 may resume their lost citizenship, as long as they are able to state an intention to return to Australia to live within three years.

I feel its inequitable to deny those who lost their Australian citizenship under Section 18 the same resumption right, when the 2002 repeal of Section 17 signals that Australia as a country now accepts dual citizenship as sound policy for the 21st century.

I note that Australian law changed with effect from 1st July 2002 to allow people who renounced their Australian citizenship in order to retain another citizenship to apply to resume their Australian citizenship up to the age of 25 years. However, this provision does not assist me, because I was over the age of 25 on 1st July 2002.

Regardless of the fact that I am not formally an Australian citizen, I consider myself to be an integral part of Australia's now significant diaspora. Many thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the work of your Committee in this Inquiry.

Many thanks for
reading my
letter.

Yours faithfully
Paula Tray