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From:
George John Bugeia

Kercem, Gozo
Malta.

To:
The Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional references Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

30th January 2004

Dear Sir,

I was born in Sydney, Australia on 29th December 1968. My parents had emigrated to Australia from Malta in 1964.

As a child I enjoyed dual citizenship because I was Australian by birth under Australian law and Maltese by descent under Maltese law. In 1979, when I was seven years old, my family moved back to Malta.

Under Maltese citizenship law I was obliged to decide between Maltese and Australian citizenship between my 18th and 19th birthdays. I was required to present documentary evidence that I had formally renounced my Australian citizenship in order to keep my Maltese citizenship beyond my 19th birthday. I opted to keep my Maltese citizenship in adulthood due to the fact that life in Malta for me, without Maltese citizenship, would have been extremely difficult. I would not have been entitled to buy property and gain access to employment in the public service.



I renounced my Australian citizenship because I was compelled to and essentially I had no choice. I was born in Australia and consider myself to be Australian. Australian citizenship is my birthright because I was born in Australia. Also, I have many aunts, uncles and cousins still living in Australia.

The Australian Citizenship Act 1948 made a provision for those who lost their citizenship. I feel it is 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. Not only should the current resumption provision apply to Section 18 victims, such as myself, but should be broadened to former Australians overseas.

Australian-born Maltese are being discriminated against under Australian law. Now Australian law with effect from 1st July 2002 is allowing people up to the age of 25 to resume their Australian citizenship. But this provision does not assist me, because I was over 25 on 1st July 2002.

I consider myself to be an integral part of Australia's now considerable diaspora .

Many thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the work of your committee in this enquiry.

Yours faithfully



George John Bugeja