



To; The Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Submission to Inquiry into Australia Expatriates

Dear Sir/Madam,

I was born in Footscray Melbourne Australia on the 20/12/1968. My mother and father migrated to Australia from Malta in 1960.

As a child I enjoyed dual citizenship: I was Australian by birth under Australian law and Maltese by descent under Maltese law.

In 1984 When I was 15 years old I fell in love with my husband. A few months later my boyfriend at that time left to go live in Malta permanently with his parents. In late March 1985 at the tender of age 16 I left my family with their blessing to be with him in Malta. It was a difficult decision to make but I was convinced it was the right one. My parents let me go because they knew his parents for many years. Our mothers even went to school together. They knew that, I would be well taken care of.

Being born in Australia, at the time I left Australia I was an Australian citizen I was also a Maltese citizen by descent, because when I was born my parents were Maltese born Maltese citizens. I left Australia on a Maltese passport so I would not need a visa to go there as a Maltese citizen I would work freely in Malta.

I was approaching my 19th birthday. My boss at work informed me that he was instructed by the department of labor and immigration to inform me that if I did not sign a declaration of renunciation of Australian citizenship at the Australian high commission. I would be dismissed from my job and eventually I would have to leave the country. As I was in a serious relationship at that time with my fiancé I felt I had to do everything that was needed to do so that I remained legal in Malta.

At no point was I informed by any authority of any action I could take to avoid renunciation. I felt I had no choice but to reluctantly renounce my Australian citizenship in order to retain my Maltese.

Had I not renounced my Australian citizenship I would have suffered significant hardship of an economic nature. I would not have been able to work legally in Malta and would have been deprived of free health care, social security, even the right to own immovable property such as a house.

Today thanks to reforms in the Maltese citizenship law taken by a newly elected conservative government. The Maltese are enjoying the vast advantages of dual citizenship. I also welcome reforms in the Australian citizenship law introduced by the Howard government. It is defiantly a step in the right direction.

Unfortunately for me I can not resume my citizenship because I'm over the age of 25. even though I have all of my family here my parents, brother and 3 sisters and their respective family's and family friends and old family friends.

The law in its present form, denying me, what should be my birth right. I feel it's morally wrong for anyone to tell me I'm too old to resume my Australian citizenship. At present I'm not too old to become an Australian citizen by grant, which means I have to migrate to become a permanent resident and after 12 months I can become a naturalized Australian.

I feel it's an insult to become a naturalized Australian because I was born here. it doesn't make sense that 900,000 permanent residence, most to whom where not born here and are eligible to become Australian citizens and 2500 former Australian citizens including myself, my husband and my sister-in-law can't resume our citizenship only because we are over 25 years of age.

My family and I have been suffering for the last 2 years trying to find a way back home. We've been back for almost a year and are facing a beurocratic nightmare trying to migrate back to our native Australia. We've spent thousands of dollars in fees unnecessarily just because we can't resume our citizenship. My husband Steve Schembri explained the unnecessary hardships were facing in his submission. I'm not only born and raised here in Melbourne Australia. My parents have been permanent residence here for over 40 years and my 3 sisters and brother are all Australian citizens and there respective family's all live here in Melbourne. I'm the sole remaining relative of my family and believe it or not I don't meet the basic requirements to migrate as a last remaining relative category because I have my in-laws in Malta. In others words DIMIA said trade your parents for your in laws.

We've just sent in our application for skilled migration with Steve as the main applicant and were told we would not be grated a bridging visa and a work permit to stay here our home while our application takes 12 months or more to be processed. Were expected to leave our home and wait overseas. Skilled migration is granted on a points system. You get 60 points for you skill, 20 for your age, but ironically none for being born here.

My husband has expressed his wish to give evidence at a public hearing. Please don't deny him this once in a life time opportunity to put forward our case of extreme hardship faced because of this senseless age limit.

Please help us get back what was taken from us by the MINTOFF Maltese Government. Our citizenship is our birth right. Thank you for giving me this chance to submit my views and opinions to the senate inquiry. I trust that you will consider my submission seriously. Once again I thank you.

Yours faithfully



Lillian Schembri