

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

CITIZENSHIP.

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I make this submission as an individual private citizen.

I migrated to Australia in 1980 and became a citizen in 1985. In becoming a citizen I emotionally and spiritually revoked the citizenship of my birth. When travelling internationally I always represent myself as Australian, travelling on an Australian passport. I never considered myself as a dual citizen, even when I return to the country of my birth. Legally I still qualify for the citizenship of my birth, but citizenship has a dimension beyond legality. It is a complete commitment which, until the recent debate, I had mistakenly understood to be a mutual and irrevocable obligation between myself and the State and Institutions of Australia.

The rationale being used to promote the revoking of citizenship is that Australian citizenship is of such privilege and value that illegal behaviour is sufficient to void the mutual obligation from the State and Institutions. Currently such behaviour is a wide proscription of acts broadly linked to terrorism.

This rationale is seriously flawed. In reality it completely debases the value of citizenship for dual citizens. Right now the **only** citizenship I have an absolute claim to is that of my birth. My Australian citizenship has become discretionary on the determination of the Government of the day. The notions of “allegiance” and “banishment” have medieval connotations unsuited to the complexity and diversity of Australian society. It is ill-conceived in a nation of migrants. I have no doubt it will fuel and sustain division in our diverse society. The application of the proposition will cause more problems than it will resolve.

The State should not be able to revoke its obligations to a citizen by choosing not to enforce the consequence of mutual obligation. All illegality should be treated in the same manner. When a citizen has breached their obligations they should be subject to the application of the law, thus enforcing and reinforcing the mutual obligations of citizens. To revoke these obligations on the part of the State is to encourage those misguided enough to breach the law.

However, and most importantly, as a measure to enhance our security from terrorist threats it will be counterproductive, simply because it is inherently divisive. One is confronted with the question as to whether this is the intent of the proposition. The measures pander and reinforce the notion of “Go back to where you came from” the catch cry of bigoted and simple minded elements within our community. Elements that should not be encouraged if we are to be a harmonious community, united under just laws and Government for all.

The warnings of the NSW Police Deputy Commission and the Race Relations Commission at today's Community Cohesion Conference regarding white supremacist groups are timely. Threats to our community come many directions. In the USA police forces have collectively identified white supremacist as the principle threat to public safety. In addition we have today's report that MP George Christensen is to address an anti Islam rally and is quoted making deeply divisive comments regarding the Islamic community. The tinderbox is being fuelled; does Parliament want to add to the fuel?

Finally the measures are a significant overreach and disproportionate to the risks. Certainly in comparison to the lack of action regarding greater threats, most notably Carbon Pollution, which places real, identifiable and catastrophic risks to our food security, safety, personal well being and consequently, social harmony.

Revoking Citizenship does little to protect us or prevent radicalisation, however it will reinforce division and provide a platform for those seeking to do us harm. For the sake of harmony do not sow the seeds of division, once cast they risk being out of control. Rather seek to enhance the mutual obligations of citizenship.