

Inquiry into Section 44 of the Constitution Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

The following submission is submitted by myself in my personal capacity, and is not connected to or authorised by any organisation or other person.

For the Committee's information I worked for many years in the IT industry and am now a self funded retiree.

I respectfully provide this submission and request that the Committee give it due consideration.

Donald J (Jim) Catt

The following submission to the inquiry specifically addresses Item C of the Terms of Reference.

1. There appear to be two basic types of dual citizens: those that were born in a foreign country who have become naturalised Australian citizens, but have not renounced the citizenship of their birth, and those who have inherited foreign citizenship through their parents or other ancestors or have acquired foreign citizenship through marriage or some other operation of foreign law.
2. There seems to be a general consensus that the second category is somehow qualitatively different from the first. It seems beyond doubt that Messrs Joyce and Alexander and ex Senator Waters were and are, to use the vernacular, dinkum Australians, trapped by the operation of foreign citizenship law. No one, I submit, would seriously suggest that any of them were less loyal Australians because of that inherited foreign citizenship. It seems unreasonable then for them and others like them to be disqualified from being elected to Parliament.
3. The first category of dual citizens seems on the face of it, more problematic. If one has emigrated to Australia, taken up citizenship here, and wishes to enter Parliament, then it is reasonable to require one to renounce the foreign citizenship first. I would argue, however, that this requirement is nothing more than symbolic. Consider my personal example.
4. I was born in New Zealand and moved to Australia as a young man in the mid eighties. I became a naturalised Australian citizen about 20 years ago. I have lived approximately half of my life in each country. I am, without doubt, a product of both countries. I have close ties to New Zealand (my siblings and their children still reside there) and I retain a connection to New Zealand's unique culture. I am also a true and loyal Australian, with deep ties to this community through marriage and friendship.
5. Renouncing my New Zealand citizenship would have absolutely no effect on who I am or on my connections to the cultures of each country. It certainly would have no effect on my loyalty to Australia nor to my deep and abiding affection for the country of my birth.
6. To put this into the context of recent events, can anyone seriously claim that ex Senator Ludlam is somehow less loyal to Australia or less qualified to serve in the Parliament than either Senator Wong or Senator Cormann, simply because he neglected to renounce his foreign citizenship and they did not.
7. In my submission then, the citizenship qualification for election to the Federal Parliament should simply require that the candidate be a citizen of Australia. Dual citizenship, in whatever form, should not be a disqualification. This is the case in the United Kingdom and New Zealand at least and does not appear to have caused any issues or concerns about divided loyalties in those countries.
8. If that is not considered desirable or achievable, I would certainly support a change such as the example provided in Terms of Reference, Item C.