

Appendix 3

Australian Citizenship: Your right, your responsibility— National Consultation on Citizenship: Final Report

Recommendations

1. The Government should promote an inclusive understanding of Australian citizenship as a 'common bond', founded on shared values, rights and responsibilities and encourage expression of these values in everyday life.
2. Information on citizenship should be prominently displayed in Government shopfronts, at the border, in overseas posts and as part of the Australian Electoral Commission's enrolment processes.
3. The Civics and Citizenship component of the National Curriculum should be updated to include material on allegiance to Australia.
4. Online and other programmes should be developed to provide civics and citizenship education to newly arrived migrants and the wider community, drawing on the Civics and Citizenship curriculum as appropriate. The promotion of civics and citizenship should be a condition of contracts with settlement services providers.
5. The Citizenship Pledge should be updated to include language on allegiance to Australia.
6. Consideration should be given to expanding the usage of the Pledge to the broader community, for example, through school and community events.
7. Citizenship should remain a desirable and obtainable goal for those legal migrants and permanent residents who wish to become fully fledged members of Australian society, committed to its values and its interests. On balance, dual citizenship benefits Australia and should remain an option available to Australians.
8. The Government should continue to strengthen the integrity of the citizenship process, including through elements proposed in the Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.
9. In recognition of the role permanent residency plays as a qualifying step towards becoming a citizen, the Government should consider measures to strengthen the integrity of the permanent residency programme, including through appropriate civics education and other processes, such as testing.

10. The general residence requirement should be increased to a minimum of four years permanent residence immediately prior to the application for citizenship, during which time applicants may be absent from Australia for no more than 12 months in total. Applicants for citizenship should be physically in Australia to lodge their application and to acquire Australian citizenship at a ceremony.
11. The Citizenship Test should be retained, revised and updated to include questions about allegiance and more questions about the rule of law, values and democratic rights and responsibilities in the Citizenship Test. This should include questions pertinent to existing revocation of citizenship provisions.
12. The integrity of the Citizenship Test should be strengthened through limits on the number of times a person can sit but fail to pass the test before their application is refused. A person can make a new application for citizenship once he or she has gained a sufficient understanding to enable them to pass the test. Cheating on the Citizenship Test should incur appropriate penalties.
13. The Government should ensure more individuals formally make the Pledge by reducing the exemptions from participation in citizenship ceremonies and by including the Pledge in processes whereby citizenship is gained by descent, adoption or resumption.
14. The Government should consider clarifying public understanding that all Australian-born citizens and those who have citizenship by descent are bound by the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship as set out in the Preamble.
15. In view of the strong emphasis the community places on English language, the Government should improve the Adult Migration English Program (AMEP) and ensure new citizens have adequate not just basic language ability, taking into account particular circumstances.