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THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP, PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. PETER DUTTON MP, MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION

NEW MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

The Commonwealth Government intends to update the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* so dual nationals who engage in terrorism can lose their citizenship.

The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection will be able to exercise these powers in the national interest where a dual citizen betrays our country by participating in serious terrorist-related activities.

The new powers will apply to dual citizens who fight with or support groups such as ISIL, or Daesh, as well as so-called 'lone wolves', whether in Australia or on foreign soil.

The changes will be consistent with our international legal obligation not to leave a person stateless. There will also be safeguards, including judicial review, to balance these powers.

These new powers are a necessary and appropriate response to the terrorist threat. They modernise our laws and bring them closer to those of the UK, Canada, France, the United States and other countries.

Since 1949, Australians with dual citizenship who fight for a country at war with Australia have forfeited their citizenship.

There should be no difference in how we treat Australians who join a hostile army and those engaged in terrorism – both are betraying our country and don't deserve to be citizens of Australia.

Regardless of how we gain our citizenship, it is an extraordinary privilege with rights and responsibilities for all of us.

Our success as a nation is underpinned by a commitment by all Australians to a law abiding, peaceful and open society. In an environment in which terrorism is reaching out to our community, we need to ensure this is well understood.

So the Commonwealth Government will launch a national consultation to improve understanding of the privileges and responsibilities of Australian citizenship.

I have asked the Parliamentary Secretary for Social Services, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, and the Hon Philip Ruddock MP to lead the consultation.

Senator Fierravanti-Wells will undertake this task as the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General, in addition to her current role.

This alignment of Senator Fierravanti-Wells' duties will strengthen the link between existing Department of Social Services programmes and the Government's broader strategy for countering violent extremism.

I have asked Mr Ruddock to undertake this task as my Special Envoy for Citizenship and Community Engagement.

A national conversation about citizenship will enable us to consider whether the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are well understood and how we can better promote these, including among young Australians.

The consultation will seek the public's views on further possible measures, including the suspension of certain privileges of citizenship for those involved in serious terrorism.

A consultation paper on Australian citizenship and further information on the submissions process can be found at www.citizenship.gov.au.

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