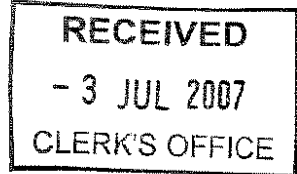


Hon Dr Bob Such MP
Member for Fisher



29 June 2007

The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
The Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Members

I write regarding the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007. I am concerned that it is too easy to become an Australian citizen and have been lobbying on this issue for several years. Australian citizenship is something that should be highly valued and regarded as a privilege.

I believe that it is vital that people are given the skills to fully participate as citizens of their new country. Just as it is important that Australians born here receive adequate education about our government, culture and history, it is not unreasonable to expect that applicants for citizenship will also have a commitment to, and understanding of, Australian values, and importantly a working knowledge of the English language.

As you know, countries such as Canada, the UK and USA test applicants on their knowledge of legal rights, court systems, lifestyle and traditions, history, geography, the responsibilities of citizenship, voting procedures and systems of government. These countries also require competence in written and oral English. Australia only requires people to have a very basic verbal knowledge of English (exemptions for those aged 50 years and over) and does not require applicants to demonstrate knowledge of our country. Our residency requirements (3 years) are also lower than the UK (5 years) and the USA (5 years).

Those applying for Australian citizenship should be required to demonstrate an understanding of life in Australia, including its indigenous people, the wider Australian culture (the notion of a fair go, women's rights, humour etc), ecology & the environment, geography, political and legal systems and history (not simply key dates but the flesh and bones of history). I am particularly supportive of the proposal to introduce an English language requirement and "values – life in Australia" test. Equally important is demonstrated competency in oral and written English. I believe that the Federal Government should assist applicants, in particular, via English and other classes where required. New citizens, like those born here, cannot participate in our democratic way of life if they don't have cultural understanding and a working knowledge of English.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of my comments on this issue.

Yours sincerely

Bob Such MP JP
Member for Fisher

6207jb citizenshiptest 29Jun.doc