



Cartoon: Sarah Hawkins

Is it too easy to become Australian

EDITORIAL

By **HANNAH MUNRO** and **SKYE JARDINE**

WHAT makes a good Australian citizen? How does our government decide which overseas migrants can become Australian citizens?

They are not required to wear thongs, eat vegemite, wrestle a crocodile or ride a kangaroo to school. To be granted Australian citizenship, you must be an Australian permanent resident, over 16 years of age, of good character with a basic knowledge of English and must have lived here as a lawful resident for a total of four years.

You must also have an adequate knowledge of your responsibilities and privileges as a citizen, monitored through the citizenship test which each applicant must complete. The 45-minute test consists of 20 multiple choice questions about Australian democracy, laws, voting rights and religious heritage and you must score at least 75 per cent to pass.

Applicants can obtain an online copy of the booklet, *Australian Citizenship. Our Common Bond*, which gives them all the information they need to pass. Too easy!

It is not enough to be able to read, remember and regurgitate the responsibilities of citizenship, we believe aspiring citizens should be fulfilling those responsibilities every day.

At a time when our government is proposing to strip citizenship from those who act against the best interests of our country, we think we need to look more closely at the process by which we grant citizenship. We must make sure we are choosing citizens who will contribute positively to our economy and society.

We suggest that applicants should be required to consistently prove their value as a citizen before applying. This would be achieved by volunteering in their local community, obeying the law, showing tolerance for others regardless of gender, race or religion and being productively employed for a minimum amount of time. This would all be checked by thoroughly scrutinised character references provided by members of the community who are proven "good Australian citizens".

It is time for us to strengthen citizenship by providing civic education to both aspiring and current citizens. In this way we can make sure that Australian citizens will never have to be stripped of their citizenship for any reason.

Holiday heroes keep on helping others

By **HALLE WALTERBACK**

STEVE and Belinda Walterback, of Wallalong, have been involved in more than their fair share of rescues. In fact, they are always wondering whether they will be called upon again to save a life. Belinda says, "I feel haunted because I don't know what to expect whenever I go out."

It all started back in 2010 on a family holiday in Coffs Harbour. "We were on the beach and the conditions were pretty rough so we were telling our girls what rips look like and how they should swim between the flags," said Belinda.

She then spotted a woman struggling to keep her head above the water. "I yelled out to my husband, Steve, who ran into the surf along with another man from Sydney. They swam out to her and dragged her back to shore."

Belinda commenced CPR and while onlookers called an ambulance, Steve grabbed a child's body board and paddled out to the victim's niece who was also caught in a rip.

After 25 minutes in the surf, Steve was finally able to push the girl in on a wave to reunite with her aunt who had recovered consciousness after seven minutes of constant CPR.

The couple each received awards for their bravery, Belinda receiving a Pride of Australia medal for heroism and Steve receiving a Royal Humane Society Bravery Award.



Belinda and Steve Walterback with their bravery awards.

Picture: Halle Walterback

Ever since then, however, rescues have been a regular occurrence. Last year, Belinda went to the aid of a Starstruck performer who had suffered a fit, and she supported a sick plane passenger on a flight to Hawaii. This year so far, she has been called upon to help an injured

dancer at a ball, and more recently, a heart attack victim at a fundraiser. Both Belinda and Steve are very humble about their achievements and although they are proud to receive their awards, they both say that they just did what anyone else would do.

Hinton Parliament making future leaders

By **MAYA** and **CALLUM REGAZZO**

HINTON Public School's Student Parliament, made up of eight year 6 representatives with ministers of varying portfolios, is co-led by two Prime Ministers, Livinia Smith and Paige Hill. Prime Ministers are elected by students with minister roles shared among remaining pupils.

The Prime Ministers explained that the parliament meets every second week in the library. A class is invited to attend as well

as two representatives from other classes.

"The session begins when the sergeant-at-arms, holding the mace, leads the ministers into Parliament. Once everyone is seated, the various ministers report on their portfolios. Students are then able to put forward motions they think are important," said Paige Hill.

Olivier Minett, year 4, says, "You get more stuff done around the school."

Cleo Moncrieff, kindergarten, believes Parliament is a good idea and



Members of Parliament at Hinton Public School.

Picture: Callum Regazzo

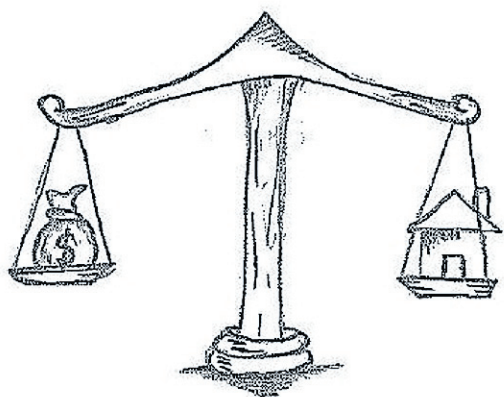
thinks it's funny to see the parliamentarians arguing. Principal Stephen Welsh, said the model "gives all

our students a voice and is a great opportunity for year 6 students to improve their leadership skills."

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