

*Request for permission to live on country
as an interim permanent resident
Easter 2011, New Way Summit, Canberra*

To the sovereign nations of the First Peoples of this Land:

I wish to apply for permission to live on country, as a permanent resident, according to your laws and cultures. This application is for myself, Jane Maria Belfrage (b.1960), and my daughter, Laura Ola Mackay Belfrage (b.2001), both of Melbourne.

I recognise past, present, and future aboriginal peoples of this your country. I recognise your unceded political sovereignties in ownership of country and culture about country. I recognise your philosophy, music and histories, into which I have entered and participated throughout my life. I recognise that we are working towards a Treaty with the colonial state, to end the colonialist era. I pledge to work with you towards that Treaty.

I believe the term 'interim permanent resident' might best describe the political status I seek. All my grandparents and parents were born in southeast Australia and this is my permanent home. I seek interim status until your sovereignty is formally recognised, when I will re-apply for citizenship. In the meantime, I wish to state that in every sense I have emigrated from colonial white Australia and immigrated into southeast aboriginal Australia. I would like my emigration/immigration to be legitimate and recognisable.

While I am grateful for my current status as an *Australian citizen*, it does not provide me with a sense of pride. It puts me in conflict with my own deepest convictions. It publicly identifies me with past acts of genocide, continuing acts of assimilation and repression, and disrespect for aboriginal peoples and cultures. It still embodies *terra nullius*. My *Australian citizenship* does not express or contain within it the energy of my allegiance and sense of belonging to the whole culture and history of this country. It causes me absolute shame and distress when the Australian state, of which I am a citizen, humiliates and insults every aboriginal person I know, including people I deeply respect.

Furthermore, the political status of 'Australian citizen' is not respected by the many traditional owners, and descendants of traditional owners, known to me. I have no further desire for my identity to be solely associated with that mantle, and ask you to release me from it by granting my request. I want my status to reflect my reality, and I want to name my status with pride.

I declare my allegiance to your peoples, countries, cultural traditions and I wish to respect your Law. I ask for a future opportunity for you to consider or test whether I might be a suitable person, along with my daughter, to be accepted by you as a permanent resident, capable of committing myself to the wellbeing of this country and peoples, and continuing to learn your values and cultures.

Jane M Belfrage