

# His Majesty George II: the boy from Hurstville who now rules a big flat



George II, otherwise known as George Cruikshank. Photo: Danielle Smith

## Justin Norrie

It could be the smallest country in the world. And it's arguably one of the youngest. But there's no doubt it's the only country ruled by a telecommunications office worker who gives interviews by mobile phone.

That could be why the *Lonely Planet* guide to Australia makes no mention of the 61 square metre Empire of Atlantium, despite the

fact it's based in the heart of one of Australia's busiest tourist strips.

"People tend not to take it seriously, but it is certainly absolutely serious," says His Imperial Majesty George II, who presides over the "cyber nation" in his Victoria Street, Kings Cross, apartment.

The 37-year-old – known during the day as George Cruikshank – unilaterally declared independence from Australia as a 15-year-old living in

Hurstville, but took his mobile nation with him when he shifted to the Cross five years ago.

Cyber-nations – or primarily non-territorial states – are set to become the way of the future, Mr Cruikshank predicts, as "geographical boundaries and ethnic identities crumble, and global mobility, cultural evolution and electronic communication take over".

And just to prove he's not mucking about, he's designed all

the insignia of a modern nation state – a constitution and judicial system, a flag, currency, citizenship certificates, a calendar and his own stamps.

While constitutional law experts pooh-pooh his claims, Mr Cruikshank insists Atlantium is "a legitimate, functioning, proto-world state that possesses imminent, parallel global sovereignty".

"You'll find there's a greater concentration of micro states in

Australia than anywhere else – there have been dozens – and if you look at it per capita, Australia is wildly in excess of every other part of the world," he said. "It comes from our convict heritage and disrespect for authority."

Mr Cruikshank says he runs his country as a not-for-profit political lobby exercise and claims it has 1000 citizens from 65 countries. But unlike better known micro states across Aust-

ralia, most notably Prince Leonard's Hutt River Province in Western Australia, his inner-Sydney sovereign state is not aimed at being a tax haven.

Dozens of enterprising Australians have unsuccessfully attempted to use secession to dodge bureaucracy.

A spokeswoman for the Tax Office said she could not comment on individual cases, but stressed that "everyone in Aust-

ralia is required to pay tax, whether they think they live in their own country or not".

On a more serious note, Mr Cruikshank is considering making the inaugural award, the Great Georgian Order, to the Israeli nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu, for his "efforts in drawing to the world's attention the dangers posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East".