

Expats feel snubbed at home

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Australians living abroad feel disconnected - even snubbed - by their home country, and more should be done to use their skills, a support group for expatriates said yesterday.

The Southern Cross Group, an international support organisation for Australians overseas, works to build links between the expatriate community and the Australian community at home.

As the nation celebrated Australia Day yesterday, the group called for a parliamentary inquiry into the Australian diaspora.

Co-ordinator John MacGregor said the federal Government should increase its connection the 5 per cent of Australians living overseas.

He said the significant contribution that thousands in the expatriate community made for the benefit of Australia as a whole and in their local communities around the world was being overlooked.

To top it off, they were snubbed by the National Australia Day Council for Australian of the Year awards because they did not principally reside in Australia.

"It seems to us there is a lack of appreciation in just about anything governments do on the impact on overseas Australians. For example, taxation, citizenship, social security, health, voting rights," Mr MacGregor said.

"The though process seems to be once you go overseas, you are no longer Australian."

Mr MacGregor made a number of recommendations, including a website aimed at helping expatriates gain comprehensive information about visas, social security, health and taxation.