

Subject: "ALP Policies for Australians Overseas"

Dear Overseas Australians and Friends,

On Australia Day, 26 January 2003, the Australian Labor Party released a major policy statement with significant implications for overseas Australians. A number of the concerns and ideas of the Southern Cross Group have been taken into account in this new document. We believe that this is the first time that a major political party in Australia has ever put forward broad policy proposals acknowledging and catering to the Australian diaspora.

Most importantly, in its 30-page Policy Paper "Fostering Australian Citizenship in a Changing World", the ALP has undertaken to initiate a parliamentary inquiry into the extent of the Australian diaspora, the needs and concerns of expatriate Australians, the measures taken by other comparable countries to respond to the needs of their expatriates, and the ways in which Australia could better use its overseas citizens to promote Australia's economic, social and cultural interests.

In the foreword, Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean, comments that Australia's inclusive, tolerant and egalitarian values as a nation have been praised "whenever our citizens venture to other lands". He also states that "we have begun to recognise that as many as one in 20 Australians live overseas at any one time and we need to grapple with the implications of this for our citizenship and other systems."

The Paper also makes the statement that "Overseas Australians are often ignored in debates about Australia's place in the world. All too often it is wrongly assumed that migration flows are solely directed towards Australia".

Many of our e-bulletin subscribers will recall that the Southern Cross Group has repeatedly spotlighted the plight of individuals who lost their Australian citizenship on the acquisition of another citizenship before the repeal of

Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 effective 4 April 2002.

Current citizenship resumption rules do not allow those who do not have an intention to move back to Australia within 3 years to get their lost citizenship back. Labor has now undertaken to work with the Southern Cross Group and other stakeholder groups to achieve a more equitable and inclusive approach to citizenship resumption. The ALP policy statement also touches on the difficulties of Maltese

Australians previously forced to renounce their
Australian citizenship due to Maltese law.

In addition, Labor's Policy Paper specifically endorses our proposal that a
government internet portal be set up especially for Australians overseas to
better provide expatriates with information specific to their needs and
interests.

Finally, the ALP has endorsed the Southern Cross Group's proposal for the
creation of a new Expatriate Australian of the Year Award.

You can download the full Policy Paper and the accompanying media release by Shadow
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Laurie Ferguson MP, at:

www.southern-cross-group.org

Best regards,

The Southern Cross Group Committee
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