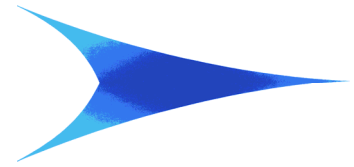


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community
www.southern-cross-group.org



MEDIA RELEASE

Government Response Dismisses Ordinary Overseas Australians

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) today expressed its disappointment with the Federal Government's recent response to Senate Committee recommendations made in the Inquiry into Australian Expatriates.

In the response tabled twenty-one months after the Senate Committee recommendations were first published, the Government rejected eight out of sixteen recommendations.

Senate Committee proposals rejected by the Government include:

- The recommendation to amend the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* to assist expatriate Australians to maintain their electoral enrolment while abroad;
- The recommendation to establish a web portal devoted to the provision of information and services for expatriate Australians;
- The recommendation that the web portal should include a page of links to expatriate network websites, to facilitate engagement and information exchange in the expatriate community;
- The recommendation to establish a policy unit with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to facilitate the coordination of policies relating to Australian expatriates;
- The recommendation that the websites of Australia's foreign missions should include an on-line registration facility to enable local expatriates to register their professional profiles, in turn allowing stronger engagement between missions and expatriates, providing a resource for missions in their work of promoting Australia's interests overseas, and allowing expatriates to be notified of upcoming events and news;
- The recommendation to amend Australian citizenship law to ensure that children of people who renounced their citizenship under Section 18 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* are eligible to apply for Australian citizenship by descent.

SCG Australian Co-ordinator John MacGregor said, "A number of very sensible proposals that the Government has rejected would not be expensive to implement but would make a big difference to the lives of many ordinary overseas Australians. Although the Government has dismissed so many of the Senate Committee's good ideas, it has to date wholly failed to put forward its own comprehensive strategy plan or blueprint for this country's future engagement with its million-strong diaspora. We can only assume that the Government finds such a step unnecessary because most of those in the diaspora are disenfranchised under Australian electoral law and have no power at the ballot box."

Details of all 16 recommendations and the Government's individual responses can be read in Senate Hansard of 7 December 2006 available at:

<http://www.southern-cross-group.org>

The 677 submissions received for the Inquiry into Australian Expatriates in early 2004, and the Senate Committee's full report of March 2005 can be accessed at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/expats03/index.htm

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About the Southern Cross Group

The Southern Cross Group is an international non-profit volunteer-run and independently-funded advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora. The SCG takes an inclusive approach in defining the Australian overseas community and works on behalf of everyone in that community, regardless of their age, educational background, occupation, professional status or income. Those who are not technically Australian citizens but who are former citizens or future citizens or otherwise have a very close family connection with Australia are also within the SCG's constituency. Since its formation in early 2000, the SCG has established a consistent track record of intelligent and timely submissions to Government on a host of Australian expatriate issues, taking the lead in establishing "the Australian diaspora" firmly in Australian domestic consciousness. The Group is best known for its work in reforming Australian citizenship law. It has also been active on the issue of expatriate disenfranchisement in the Australian electoral process, and was the driving force behind the establishment of a broad-based dedicated Federal Senate Committee Inquiry into Australian expatriates held in 2003-2005. The SCG is run by 100 volunteers in 30 countries. It has no formal members or membership fees. People interested in keeping abreast of the SCG's activities are invited to [sign up to its occasional free e-bulletins](#).

<http://www.southern-cross-group.org>

15 December 2006