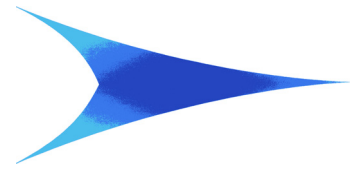


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



MEDIA RELEASE - AUSTRALIA DAY 2004

Time to Redefine Australia to include Australians Everywhere, says Expat Group

On Australia Day 2004, the Southern Cross Group (SCG) calls upon the Government to explicitly endorse a more inclusive definition of Australia - one that openly embraces the some one million Australian citizens who live abroad.

"For too long, many have failed to look beyond Australia's shores and still think of Australia as comprising merely those Australians within Australia's territorial boundaries", said Robyn Stephenson, the SCG's North American Coordinator. "It's time to actively promote the idea that Australia is the sum of its entire people - wherever they may roam. The fact that our country, with a population of 20 million people, has one million of its citizens successfully living and working abroad and representing Australia and its values and way of life in the wider global community, is something we should be celebrating on Australia Day."

The SCG welcomes steps announced on 21 January by the National Australia Day Council (NADC) and Citizenship Minister Gary Hardgrave to promote citizenship affirmation to the Australian people. Since September 2002 the SCG's website has carried an Online Affirmation Facility and the Group is encouraging Australians at home and abroad to mark Australia Day 2004 by using it to actively affirm their citizenship:

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

The SCG also renews its call for the establishment of a new award of Expatriate Australian of the Year. John MacGregor, the SCG's Australian Coordinator in Canberra, said that the Group's efforts in 2002 and 2003 had led to the NADC doing away with the requirement that nominees for the Australian of the Year awards be "principally resident in Australia". That requirement previously meant that the contributions of citizens overseas could not be recognised.

"We are aware that a number of overseas Australians were nominated for their work on behalf of Australia outside the country for this year's awards as a result of the April 2003 change," he said. "While this is a welcome step forward, a dedicated NADC Expatriate Australian of the Year Award, to stand alongside the Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year and Young Australian of the Year awards, should form part of a comprehensive and more inclusive approach to the Australian community overseas".

All Australians have the opportunity to contribute to the development of ideas and policy on the Australian diaspora as part of a current Senate Inquiry into Australian Expatriates. The SCG hopes that individual Australians everywhere, NGOs, professional organisations and community groups will make submissions to the Inquiry by the deadline of 27 February:

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

The SCG's recent book "Australian Expats: stories from abroad", published by Global Exchange, contains accounts of life overseas in 22 countries from 33 Australians ranging in age from 18 to 80 from a variety of backgrounds, and a foreword by Nikki Gemmill. Additional stories not in the book have been published on the Group's website:

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

As contributor Antasia Azure writes from New York: "We Aussies who are on a global walkabout are weaving stories worth telling. I am typing my story on a laptop covered with Vegemite paw marks and a platypus sticker...How could anyone question my connection with home? Australia raised me wild and free. Today it is my identity and strength."

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