



Minister for Family and Community Services
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone

- 2 NOV 2001

Mr John Russell and Ms Ann MacGregor
Co-founders
The Southern Cross Group
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Dear Mr Russell and Ms MacGregor

Thank you for your letter of 15 October 2001 to the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Mr Ruddock has asked me to respond to you about the issues you raise concerning bilateral social security agreements.

The Coalition is committed to extending our bilateral social security agreements as an important part of our effort to modernise Australia's social security system, and to allow people to move between Australia and other countries more freely, knowing their pension rights are recognised in both countries.

I have attached a table showing what we have achieved in this area since 1996. The list of new agreements is extensive and attests to our commitment to this area of social policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information to your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Vanstone', written in a cursive style.

AMANDA VANSTONE

AGREEMENTS ACTIVITY SINCE 1996

New Zealand

28/3/2001 - New social security agreement signed. Expected to be implemented (replacing the current agreement) from 1 July 2002.

Italy

1/10/2000 - Implementation of revised social security agreement (signed in 1993) replacing the 1986 Agreement.

Denmark

1/7/1999 - Signing of new social security agreement with Denmark

11/1/2001 - Implementation of new social security agreement.

Germany

13/12/2000 - Signing of new social security agreement with Germany, Expected to be implemented from 1 July 2002.

Austria

26/6/2001 - Signing of Protocol to the existing social security agreement with Austria. Expected to be implemented from 1 April 2002 (was 1 January 2002 but Austria not ready).

The Netherlands

2/7/2001 - New social security agreement signed. Expected to be implemented (replacing the current agreement) from 1 April 2002 (was 1 January 2002 but Netherlands not ready).

Canada

26/7/2001 - New social security agreement signed. Expected to be implemented (replacing the current agreement) from 1 April 2002 (was 1 January 2002 but Canada not ready).

Portugal

3/9/2001 - New social security agreement signed, Expected to be implemented (replacing the current agreement) from 1 July 2002 (was 1 January 2002 but Portugal not ready and Australian regulations not tabled for requisite period prior to Parliament being prorogued).

USA

2719/2001 - New social security agreement signed. Expected to be implemented from 1 October 2002 (was 1 July 2002 but USA advise not able to progress through Congress in time).

Spain

Now social security agreement expected to be signed in February 2002 (due to delays on Spanish side). Expected to be implemented from 1 July 2002 (originally expected to be 1 January 2002 but Spain not ready).

UK

1/3/2001 - termination of agreement (and commencement of protection measure introduced by the Government in 2000 Budget).

Agreements in Progress

There are six other countries we have been negotiating agreements with and which are at an advanced state. These are Chile, Croatia, Finland, Norway, Slovenia and Switzerland.

Other countries we have had preliminary discussions with or which have expressed interest in negotiations with Australia include Belgium, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Korea, Romania and Turkey.

In addition, the Government's last formal offer of an agreement to Greece was in April 1998 (Greece rejected this offer by letter received in January 2000).