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26 March 1999

The Australian Citizenship Council Secretariat
Attention: Council Chairman
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
PO Box 25
Belconnen ACT 2616
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir Ninian,

The undersigned Australian citizens involved in international business affairs in Belgium applaud the release of the Contemporary Australian Citizenship Paper by the Australian Citizenship Council and welcome the opportunity to provide input. This submission refers to paragraphs 96-102.

As business becomes increasingly globalised, more and more Australians are opting to spend large periods of their professional careers overseas. Australian citizens living and working in Belgium for medium to long periods who choose to keep their Australian citizenship face considerable administrative burdens at additional personal financial expense.

Australian professionals overseas are subjected to a patchwork of laws with obvious weaknesses in the areas of social security and residency requirements. Australian citizens working in Belgium do so as holders of yearly work permits or professional cards, with their residency permits being based on their right to work and limited accordingly, creating a situation of uncertainty. Although social security and tax contributions are made by Australians in the same way as Belgians, accrued pension entitlements over several years may not be ultimately enjoyed if an Australian chooses to retire back to Australia.

The current bilateral agreements to which Australia is a signatory offer inadequate assistance to Australian citizens living overseas for long periods. Similarly, the multilateral General Agreement on Trade in Services is in its infancy and is far from adequate for overcoming obstacles faced by Australian citizens overseas.

The undersigned firmly believe that allowing Australian citizens to take out the citizenship of the country where they are professionally active, without the need to surrender their Australian citizenship, would create a more equitable situation for all Australian citizens, given that some five million Australians are already in possession of dual citizenship.

The promotion of Australian economic and cultural interests overseas is best performed by those who speak from a position of profound interest and knowledge: Australians working overseas. The undersigned would welcome the opportunity to improve their professional situation and reduce the administrative burdens placed upon them in their country of residence, without giving up their prized Australian citizenship.

Yours sincerely,

Australians living in Belgium

Majella Anning
Julian Carroll
Annette Charak
Christine Cunningham
Michael Cunningham
Dale Emerson
Lynette England
Andrew Fotheringham
Karen Haas
Graham Ireland
Don Kenyon
Paul Kindervater
Katherine Kokorely
Richard Linning
Duncan Lodge
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Harry Mitchell
Jacqueline Mitchell
Kirk Mitchell
Helmut Nitz
Robert Parker
Valerie Parker
Alexsandro Penzo
Dianne Penzo
Simon Pritchard
Catherine Rawson
Monique Roppe
Andrew Rubinstein
John Russell
Leigh Smith
Emma Sutherland
Jane Tickner
Brian Virgo

Individual addresses and signatures attached.