

The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



May 2000

Dear

Re: Dual Nationality under Australian Citizenship Law

As an Australian living outside of your country of nationality, have you ever considered applying for the nationality of a second country, such as your country of residence?

For many Australians overseas, taking on the nationality of the country where they live and work would make their daily lives considerably easier. For example, they could vote in local elections and would not have to cope with work permit and residency permit restrictions. Entitlements under social security systems would also be more secure.

The reason that many Australians have elected not to take on a second nationality is that Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* currently provides that an Australian Citizen aged 18 or over who does "any act or thing, the sole or dominant purpose of which and the effect of which is to acquire the nationality or Citizenship of a foreign country shall ... cease to be an Australian Citizen." Due to the fact that many Australians do not want to be stripped of their Australian nationality, they elect not to take on a second nationality.

We believe that this provision is inequitable. Around 4.4 million Australian citizens already lawfully possess more than one Citizenship, while those who start from the base of having Australian Citizenship and acquire another Citizenship lose their prized Australian nationality.

In February this year the Australian Citizenship Council published a report entitled "Australian Citizenship for a New Century". This report is available on the internet at <http://www.immi.gov.au>. The Council strongly recommended that Section 17 of the *Act* be repealed so that Australian Citizens over the age of 18 do not lose their Australian Citizenship on acquisition of another Citizenship.

Following the release of the Australian Citizenship Council's Report, Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock MP called for community consultation.

The Shadow Minister for Immigration, Con Sciacca MP, put out a press release on 11 April 2000 in which the ALP indicated its full support for the Citizenship Council's recommendation. This press release is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/csmsdual110400.htm>. The Australian Democrats have not to our knowledge stated their position on this issue as yet.

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To date the Federal Government has not indicated when or if it will be introducing a Bill to amend the *Australian Citizenship Act*. If you wish to see the Council's recommendation become a reality, we would be very glad if you could add your voice to ours.

What You Can Do

If you believe, as we do, that Section 17 should be repealed, there are several ways in which you can help:

1. Write to the Minister for Immigration. A model letter is attached to help you do this, as well as the address details. You can use our text or adapt it as you feel appropriate. You might want to use your own letterhead or put in a few sentences about your own situation. The letter can be sent by post, by e-mail or by fax. You can copy it to other key decision-makers as listed if you choose. If you wish to receive an electronic version of our model letter so that you don't have to retype our text, please e-mail us at management.committee@southern-cross-group.org.
2. Go to the Australians Abroad website, at <http://www.gumnut.com/oz/expats>. This allows you to send a fax with a set text automatically to Minister Ruddock and copied to other key MPs advocating the repeal of Section 17. If you do not wish to spend time on point 1 above, this is the quickest and easiest way to have your say.
3. Spread the word! Tell other Australians, both overseas and in Australia about this issue! Their voice is important too.
4. Send us your contact details, including e-mail address, if you would like to be put on our free mailing list to be kept informed of developments on this issue, and other issues which the Southern Cross Group is presently working on. Your personal data will not be given to any other organization.
5. Questions? Comments? The UK Co-ordinator on the Southern Cross Group Management Committee is Lorraine Buckland, tel 0207 5847268.

Let's work together to make Australia's Citizenship law appropriate for a global community in the 21st Century!

Yours sincerely,
The Southern Cross Group Management Committee

The Southern Cross Group is a non-profit organization founded in Brussels, Belgium in January 2000 by a group of primarily Australians and New Zealanders, in response to a growing realization that there are a number of issues which impact negatively on individuals who are seeking to work effectively within the professions, multinational companies and organisations outside of their country of nationality. The aim of the Group is to work towards the removal of legal and practical barriers which presently impede mobility in the global community. Membership is free and the Group has members all over the world.