The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community

EMBARGOED UNTIL 16.00 AEST THURSDAY 27 APRIL 2000

Australians Abroad Call for Swift Action on Dual Nationality

The Southern Cross Group calls on the Australian Government to move quickly to introduce legislation allowing dual nationality for all Australian citizens.

Currently, up to five million Australians hold dual nationality, whereas approximately 14 million Australians are excluded. As Prime Minister John Howard meets European business leaders in Paris today to discuss closer economic ties with Europe, Australian citizens working abroad who are helping to improve Australia's international economic links are in many cases disadvantaged. They face administrative and financial burdens in their country of residence which others do not. An amendment to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* would provide one solution.

Australians who have the right to take out the nationality of another country presently cannot do so without being stripped of their Australian citizenship.

Anne MacGregor, an Australian solicitor who has practiced EC law in Brussels for 6 years, said, "Australians who live abroad for professional or personal reasons and acquire the right to take the nationality of their country of residence face a stark choice – a choice between severing their commitment to Australia as a citizen, or continuing to endure the extra hurdles of being resident in a country of which they are not a national."

Such hurdles include insecurity of tenure, delays and uncertainty in obtaining and regularly renewing work and residency permits, and the fact that non-national tax payers in some countries do not have the right to benefit from the social security systems which they must by law contribute to.

In February this year the Australian Citizenship Council released a report on "Australian Citizenship for a New Century". It strongly recommended that Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* be repealed so that Australian citizens over the age of 18 do not lose their Australian citizenship on acquisition of another citizenship.

Every Australian citizen living and working abroad is effectively an ambassador for Australia, with their skills and experience as well as the network they provide constituting a valuable asset for the country in a modern globalised economy. The Southern Cross Group urges the Government to introduce amending legislation without delay to repeal Section 17.

CONTACT DETAILS: Anne MacGregor +32.477.378 641
John Russell +32.2.743 42 20

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 realisation that there are a number of issues which impact negatively on individuals who are seeking to work effectively within the professions, multinational companies and organizations 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.

John Russell, Shandwick Public Affairs, 12 Avenue de Tervuren, B-1040 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 743 42 20 Fax: +32 2 743 4222
Email: management.committee@southern-cross-group.org
www.southern-cross-group.org