

# The Southern Cross Group

Promoting mobility in the global community



## AUSTRALIANS WORKING OVERSEAS CALL FOR A CHANGE IN NATIONALITY LAWS

The Southern Cross Group representing Australian professionals living and working overseas, calls on the government to modernize citizenship laws to allow Australians working abroad to retain their Australian citizenship if they acquire citizenship of another country.

The Southern Cross Group believes an appropriate time to implement these changes would be the centennial celebration of Federation in 2001.

Australians living and working overseas experience significant hardships in conducting their business and other work activities, and are denied full social security and other rights in many countries, because they cannot take out citizenship of the country they are working in, without losing their Australian nationality.

Many Australians work overseas alongside colleagues of other nationalities who do not experience the same restrictions.

The Southern Cross Group believes current Australian law which leads to Australians being stripped of their Australian citizenship if they apply for citizenship of another country, is out of date. It is inappropriate in an age of global mobility and growth of international trade and services.

It is also discriminatory. An estimated 4.4 million Australians born overseas can legally hold dual nationality. However, those who start with Australian citizenship and acquire another citizenship, lose their Australian citizenship. This denies many Australians equal protection under the law.

Australians overseas represent a valuable network and resource for Australia. Their commitment to Australia is in no way diminished by the fact that they are not resident in Australia.

The Southern Cross Group has prepared a position paper supporting the Australian Citizenship Council's recommendation earlier this year that Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* be repealed, so that Australian citizens over the age of 18 do not lose their Australian citizenship on acquisition of another citizenship.

We call on the Government to introduce legislation to amend the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* to this effect without delay.

Members of The Southern Cross Group are available for interview, either in Belgium or other parts of Europe and, during home visits, in Australia. For further background and information, please contact:

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*The Southern Cross Group is a non-profit organisation 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 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.*