



## Global mobility crucial for law graduates

Many of us, as we go through law school, have aspirations to do something international afterwards in our professional lives. Some are going overseas to work, or becoming a part of "international law firms." But you may not realize, before you actually embark on this path, the sort of obstacles you are likely to encounter. Recently one ANU law graduate, who has now lived and worked overseas for nine years, was one of a number of professional Australians overseas to set up a new non-profit organization dedicated to promoting mobility in the global community.

The issues the Southern Cross Group is currently concerned with are very relevant to Australia's aspiring legal global nomads. Although the Southern Cross Group was primarily founded by Australians, its mandate encompasses working for the removal of any legal, administrative or technical barrier which persons of any nationality living and working outside their country of citizenship come up against.

High on the SCG's current agenda is Australian law on dual citizenship. Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 presently provides for the loss of Australian nationality on the intentional acquisition of another. In contrast, there are up to 5 million Australians who legally hold dual nationality as a result of migration or birth. The SCG has been lobbying the Government to have Section 17 repealed, in line with the Australian Citizenship Council's February 2000 recommendation. But the Government is being slow to move.

The lives of many Australians who live overseas for extended periods would be considerably simplified if they could take on the nationality of the country in which they live. Work permits would not be necessary, for example, and people would be able to vote locally. But many have been reluctant to give up their Australian passports and therefore continue to endure various burdens as aliens where they live.

For Aussie lawyers who may be Europe-bound, there are several issues which need attention. Firstly, while

in Europe, you will have to pay into national social security schemes in the country where you live, but unless Australia has a bilateral social security agreement with that country, you may never be able to draw on that system in retirement, for example.

Few would be aware of the fact that the bilateral social security agreement between Australia and the UK was recently terminated. Furthermore, non-EU nationals who legally reside in the EU are not recognized by EU social security legislation which provides for the coverage of EU nationals when they move around within Europe. If you pay into the Belgian social security scheme as an Australian, then retire to the south of France, you will have no right to a pension, whereas a Belgian or other EU-national would.

In the year since the SCG was set up, it has become clear that there is a great need for an organization of this kind to work on mobility issues. Presently, the Group has its main office in Brussels, with coordinators also in Canberra, London and Washington DC. All its work is carried out by busy professionals who give their time and energy on a voluntary basis, communicating mainly by e-mail.

The SCG also has several enthusiastic law students in Adelaide who help with research and fact finding in their spare time. Despite this, more enthusiasts are always welcome to join the crew, wherever they may be. The Group is also now offering unpaid internship placements in its Brussels office, and full details are on its website.

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*The Southern Cross Group's website is [www.southern-cross-group.org](http://www.southern-cross-group.org). To be added to the Group's free e-mail bulletin list or to apply for the internship or help in any other capacity, please contact [info@southern-cross-group.org](mailto:info@southern-cross-group.org).*