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## No Change To Rules For Dual Citizenship

The Australian government has decided not to make a decision on changing the rules preventing Australians from taking dual citizenship except by virtue of descent or naturalisation.

A repeal of section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 has been eagerly sought by a number of people as well as the Southern Cross Group—the only international non-profit advocacy organisation representing Australians living and working abroad.

SCG was highly critical of Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock's announcement which means that Australians will continue to forfeit their Australian nationality on acquisition of another citizenship while the government engages in further community consultation of undetermined duration.

"Some five million Australians already enjoy the privileges of dual citizenship, by virtue of descent or naturalisation. But the government was unwilling to grant equal treatment to the other three-quarters of Australian citizens and continues to penalise Australians living abroad," said SCG.

"The government's failure to embrace a February 2000 Australian Citizenship Council recommendation to amend the Citizenship Act means that those starting from a base of having only Australian citizenship will continue to lose their Australian nationality when they acquire another citizenship."

In Washington DC, Anne MacGregor, SCG North American Coordinator, said: "The government is well aware that many Australians living overseas have been denied full social security benefits and voting rights because they have not been able to take out citizenship of their host country while continuing to hold Australian citizenship."