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**Australian diaspora pushing for Dual Citizenship**  
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Australians Abroad, an organisation concerned with the well-being of Australians living and working abroad, is petitioning the Australian government on the issue of dual citizenship for native-born Australians.

The situation at present is governed by Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948. This Act sets out that any native born Australian must relinquish their Australian citizenship to acquire the citizenship of another country. Non-native born Australians, that its foreign nationals holding Australian permanent residence, are permitted, by this legislation, to attain Australian citizenship while maintaining their original citizenship, subject to the laws of their country of original citizenship.

The Australian Citizenship Council, an organisation set up to deliberate on issues around citizenship, submitted a report to the government in late December 1999. This report was made public in February 2000 and can be read at <http://www.immi.gov.au/citizenship/report.htm> The report recommends the amendment of the 1948 Act to allow dual citizenship for native-born Australians.

At a press conference on 17 May 2001, Immigration Minister Mr Philip Ruddock said "the Government is disposed to support repeal of the relevant section of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948 so that people no longer lose citizenship in these circumstances.

"However, given the significance of this change to long standing citizenship law and practice, it is important that the community has a further opportunity to express its opinions.

"Accordingly, the Government intends to issue a discussion paper inviting community opinions on this issue before making a final decision," Mr Ruddock said.

The stance of Australians Abroad and The Southern Cross Group - a non-governmental organisation concerned with enhancing global mobility for international workers and travelers - is that there is no need for further community consultation or any other delay. You can visit their websites at <http://www.australiansabroad.com> and <http://www.southern-cross-group.org> . You can sign their petition at these websites. Their argument is that the shortcomings of the 1948 Act violate the rights of Australians working abroad, specifically in that them having to give up their Australian citizenship on attaining another impedes their future visits to Australia and interaction with the Australian community.

The other pertinent argument is set out in the Bulletin, November 21, 2000. There are over 820,000 Australian citizens currently working abroad (around 220,000 in the UK and 417,000 in the 15 EU countries) and not allowing them to hold dual citizenship could result in their permanent loss to Australia.

For more information check out [www.australiansabroad.com](http://www.australiansabroad.com) or [www.southern-cross-group.org](http://www.southern-cross-group.org).