



Media Releases and Speeches

18 May 2001

Government Should Move on Reversing the Legal Brain Drain

President of the Law Council, Anne Trimmer has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement that it supports removal of the current restrictions on dual citizenship.

Ms Trimmer said, "The Government's deferral of a decision on dual citizenship however, contradicts its immigration policies aimed at attracting skilled workers.

On Wednesday this week Mr Ruddock was quoted in the media as saying Australia is competing with other countries to attract skilled migrants.

Large numbers of skilled Australians, from the legal and technology sectors in particular, are being drawn overseas to work. The skills and experience they gain overseas are a resource the nation cannot afford to abandon. The Government needs to do all it can to encourage them to repatriate.

The Minister's announcement yesterday that he will be issuing a discussion paper on dual nationality to encourage debate is also welcome. But a decision on the issue is needed soon if Australia is to remain internationally competitive."

Australia is alone among major immigration countries, such as New Zealand, Canada and the United States, in prohibiting citizens born in Australia from holding another nationality. Naturalised Australians however are able to retain the citizenship of their country of birth after taking out Australian citizenship. This in effect discriminates against Australian born citizens.

Australian professionals living overseas for long periods are confronted with a difficult choice - to retain their Australian citizenship and be treated as a foreign alien in the country in which they live and work, or accept foreign citizenship and be treated as an foreign alien in their country of birth.

Ms Trimmer said, "Dual nationality encourages Australian professionals working overseas to return, bringing valuable international experience back into the Australian workforce, in effect reversing the brain drain. Conversely, losing their Australian nationality is an active discouragement to repatriate. Dual nationality also encourages international business, travel and creates work opportunities.

Media contacts: Anne Trimmer, President, Law Council of Australia – 02 6274 3284 / 0419 269 855
Deborah Nesbitt - 02 6247 3788/ 0419 269 855

Media contact: Deborah Nesbitt on (02) 6247 3788 bh or 0419 269 855 ah.
