

IIA call for dual citizen rights

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□ Citizenship

SKILLED Australians working overseas but keen to come home were being hampered by restrictive citizenship arrangements, a key industry group said yesterday.

The Internet Industry Association (IIA) welcomed the Federal Government's recent decision to consider changing the current citizenship regime, saying that would lead to more Australians with key IT skills returning home to work.

Under Section 17 of the Citizenship Act, Australians forfeit their Australian nationality on acquiring another citizenship.

"It's important the Government moves to repeal this provision if we're to encourage back to Australia colleagues who for business reasons had to take out overseas citizenships and, in the process were forced to renounce their Australian ones," IIA executive director Peter Coroneos said.

"This decision will have important implications for the repatriation of skills and investment," he said.

"We welcome Minister Ruddock's review and we look forward to a positive outcome."

Last month, federal Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said the Government was willing to repeal the law that prevents Australians from holding dual citizenship.

Mr Ruddock said he was "disposed" to the change, but would issue a commun-

ity discussion paper before making a final decision.

The Australian Citizenship Council has recommended the law be changed.

The Opposition said at the time Australia was one of the few countries that prevented its citizens from having dual nationality.

The US, Canada, Britain and New Zealand allow dual citizenship.

Mr Ruddock said repealing section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act was a "question of fairness".

"Some people would argue that by saying an Australian can't acquire another nationality, even though we have three or four million Australians living here as dual citizens, they are intrinsically disadvantaged," Mr Ruddock said.

Australians older than 18 automatically lose their citizenship once another citizenship has been granted, but people who migrate to Australia often retain dual citizenship because their country of origin allows it.

Australian Information Industry Association executive director Rob Durie said the AIIA was aware some groups were lobbying on the issue but the association did not view it as a major problem.

Labor has said it will repeal Section 17 if it comes into government later this year. Earlier this month, Mr Ruddock released a discussion paper on the issue, and submissions are due by 6 July 2001.

www.immi.gov.au/citizenship/0601paper/index.htm