

The Brussels Bulletin
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Talk of the town John Miller

Crossed out

The Southern Cross Group, a Brussels-based organisation that lobbies for the rights of EU dual nationals and Australians abroad, experienced a setback on May 17. Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock announced that his government would not permit Australians to keep their passports when they acquire another citizenship. The ruling had been fought by a vigorous campaign coordinated by the Group: over 1,000 Australians, mostly from overseas, wrote, emailed and faxed Canberra.

"It's a contentious issue in Australia," says John Russell, who co-founded the group. "Dual citizenship means multiculturalism and the Conservative government is afraid of a right-wing backlash."

The battle is not over yet, and all those concerned are being steered toward www.coolabah.com/oz/expats/dual.cfm, from which you can send a fax to cabinet members. "It's absurd," says Russell. "Immigrants who take Australian citizenship are allowed dual citizenship but native-born Australians who move abroad aren't." Some 820,000 Australians live outside their country.

The group meets on June 18, at 6.30 pm, at the Australian Embassy, 6-8 Rue Guimard. Everyone is welcome. Telephone 02.743.42.20 or visit www.southern-cross-group.org