


Industry group seeks stop to citizenship bars

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The Internet Industry Association has called on the Australian Federal Government to repeal a section of the Dual Citizenship Act because it acts as a barrier to the development of the nation's information economy.

The group has also raised concerns that the Act may prevent expatriate Australian workers from returning to Australia if they have to renounce citizenship of other countries.

In a submission sent to Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Minister Philip Ruddock late last week, the IIA said section 17 of the Act put Australia at a disadvantage compared to other advanced technology nations.

Section 17 of the Act effectively bars Australian nationals from holding dual citizenship.

However, the IIA has argued the requirement to relinquish nonAustralian citizenships is a barrier to labor and capital mobility "of those who are best able to contribute to the strengthening of the Australian information economy".

"The Internet industry within Australia has for some time been subject to a talent drain to more attractive destinations overseas," the submission from IIA chief executive Peter Coroneos says.

"Higher remuneration arising from the exchange rate differential between Australia and the US, for example, combined with a bigger market in which to develop, test and sell new technologies are key considerations in setting up offshore operations.

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"Combined with the exhausting travel regimen and family disruption, these factors ultimately force successful Australian executives to relocate.

"These economic and social considerations sometimes necessitate the assumption of foreign citizenship for unavoidable and legitimate business reasons.

However such decisions should not be construed as acts of disloyalty to be reined in by policies which developed in a preglobalised world economy," it said.

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The IIA said the renunciation of citizenship was a last resort "undertaken at considerable angst to the relevant individual", and represented an act of rejection by Australia.

"We therefore think that the future of our local internet industry would be assisted by a better repatriation of key personal who should not be subjected to these outdated strictures in the pursuit of their careers, particularly where it operates to the ultimate detriment of our national skill and capital base.

"Among other things, we would like to see some of the 7500 Australians in Silicon Valley return home, and will publicly support any move by the Australian Government to relax the current restrictions," it said.

