

Dual citizenship lifts chances for business

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AN Australian can now become an American or even British in new citizenship laws expected to boost the country's profile in the global business community.

Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock yesterday gave the green light to change laws to allow Australians to live in two countries.

He said the changes would allow internationally mobile Australians to access overseas opportunities while maintaining links with Australia.

"They will ensure Australia remains one of the world leaders in information economy -- and provide the largest transformation of internal and external government services ever," Mr Ruddock said.

Internet Industry Association chief executive Peter Coroneos has been a keen advocate for dual citizenship.

Mr Coroneos said it was vital to leave the door open for professional Australians who for business reasons take out foreign citizenship.

With dual citizenship the door was always open for talented Australians to come home, he said.

"Major trading partners have long allowed the holding of dual citizenship," he said.

For us to be competitive with major trading partners, it is important we remove any barriers to the repatriation of skills and capital.

"The only downside is that the legislation is not retrospective."

The third Government Online survey shows Commonwealth online services are becoming more sophisticated in offering downloadable and interactive information.

"We have deliberately set the bar very high in Australia to achieve this vital transformation," Mr Ruddock said.

"Just as the private sector is responding to the challenge of e-commerce and ICT developments and the changing environment -- so is the Commonwealth."

The new laws will not be retrospective, ensuring Rupert Murdoch, who became an American citizen, will not automatically have his Australian passport returned.