

## **Southern Cross Group E-Bulletin to Members**

3 August 2001

### **Government Agrees to Allow Dual Citizenship**

Dear Southern Cross Group Friends,

We are very pleased to inform you that on Friday 3 August 2001, Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock announced that the Government has decided it will repeal Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948.

This means that those starting from a base of only Australian citizenship will no longer lose their citizenship when they take on a second citizenship. Effectively, all Australians will then have the right to dual citizenship.

Read the Southern Cross Group's media release on this at [http://www.southern-cross-group.org/sys-tmpl/nss-folder/dualnationalitydocuments/SCG\\_Press\\_release\\_3rd\\_August\\_2001.doc](http://www.southern-cross-group.org/sys-tmpl/nss-folder/dualnationalitydocuments/SCG_Press_release_3rd_August_2001.doc)

The Minister's media release of the same date can be accessed at [http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media\\_releases/media01/r01109.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media_releases/media01/r01109.htm)

PLEASE NOTE: While this is very good news, we stress that we are not "past the post" yet. In order to remove Section 17 from the Citizenship Act, the Government must introduce legislation to amend the Act, and this legislation must be passed by both Houses, and then it must come into effect. The Southern Cross Group urges the Government to prioritize this legislation now so that it is in force before the Parliament rises for the Federal Election.

Note that if you are an Australian overseas contemplating taking on another citizenship, you should wait until Section 17 is actually repealed BEFORE you apply for the citizenship of another country. This may take several months. We will post updates on the progress of the amending legislation to our site as they become available.

Finally, we want to remind everyone that even when Section 17 is finally gone, those former Australians who have lost their citizenship in the past under the provision WILL NOT automatically suddenly have their Australian citizenship restored. This change will help those who wish to acquire a second nationality in the future, but Section 17 is not being repealed retrospectively. The Southern Cross Group made recommendations to Government in its 6 July 2001 submission urging further amendments so that past victims of Section 17 could also be catered for, however none of these recommendations were accepted. We will continue to work for these additional amendments with your support.

The only way for past victims of Section 17 to regain their lost citizenship is to use the current resumption provision in the Citizenship Act (Section 23AA). This provision unfortunately is of little use to former Australians who are living overseas indefinitely and

do not feel able to make a declaration that they intend to return to live in Australia within 3 years.

We have learned that over 800 submissions were received by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs by the 6 July consultation deadline. The vast majority of these came from Australians overseas. Thanks again to everyone who put pen to paper or finger to keyboard! In the last few months Cabinet Members in Canberra have also received over 1000 letters, faxes and e-mails in addition to our submissions.

Many thanks to everyone for continuing to back us in this campaign. Let's hope we see that legislation introduced into Parliament ASAP!

Best regards,

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