

Southern Cross Group E-Bulletin to Members

27 September 2001

Dual Citizenship/Overseas Voting

Dear Southern Cross Group Friends,

We know that many have been waiting to hear what progress has been made on the bill to repeal Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948, which was tabled in the House of Representatives in Canberra on 23 August.

Unfortunately, although it was on the House Notice Paper all week, time did not permit it to reach a second reading debate in the House by close of business on 27 September. It seems this was the last sitting date before the Federal Election.

For full details on what the prognosis is now on the repeal of Section 17, please go to our website at

<http://www.southern-cross-group.org>

We remain committed, with your help, to achieving the repeal of Section 17, and we will be doing everything we can over the coming months to make sure this happens early in the term of the new Parliament. We will keep you updated.

At this time we urge all Australian citizens overseas to get organised to vote without delay, if the Electoral Act actually permits you to vote in your particular circumstances. The Electoral Roll will probably close shortly after 14 October and the Election is likely to be Saturday 17 November. The SCG would like to maximise the vote from Australians living abroad in this Election. So if the law allows you to vote, please do so - even though it is not compulsory if you are overseas. Remember, without a voice at the ballot box, it is difficult to make ourselves heard at home on issues such as citizenship. In the 1998 election, only 65,000 votes were issued overseas to the approximately 600,000 Australians abroad aged 18 or over.

Details on voting from overseas are up on our website. You may need to check with the Australian Electoral Commission now whether you are still on the Electoral Roll - you must be on the Roll to vote.

Once the Election is announced, it will be possible to apply for a postal vote using the form supplied on the www.aec.gov.au website.

If you are not sure whether you can vote from overseas after reading the information on our website, please get in touch with Anne at anne@southern-cross-group.org. We would also like to hear from people who find that the current law disenfranchises them.

Please help us by forwarding this message on to other expatriate Australians you think may have an interest in these issues. Our e-bulletin service is free and people can sign up through our website for our mailing list.

Best regards,

Anne MacGregor/John Russell
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