



Mr Arthur Sinodinos
Chief of Staff
Office of the Prime Minister
GPO Box 59
Sydney NSW 2001
AUSTRALIA

Fax: 0061 2 9251 5454

18 January 2002

Dear Mr Sinodinos,

We are writing to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you in Sydney on Tuesday 18 December 2001.

Both Anne MacGregor and myself were greatly encouraged to hear that following the election, the Government still intends to introduce legislation to repeal Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* as early as possible. As we discussed, this implementation of the Government's intention to allow dual citizenship for all Australians is being eagerly anticipated by many thousands of Australians overseas. Our Group is currently receiving several enquiries daily as to the status of the change. The timely repeal of Section 17 will mark a significant milestone, removing an inequality for many Australians and will greatly facilitate their lives overseas in a number of very practical ways.

You may remember that we also raised with you the subject of voting by Australians overseas. We are concerned that many Australian citizens abroad no longer have the right to vote because of the technicalities in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* which govern enrollment and voting from overseas. As we signaled to you, we will be making a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters when it reviews the 2001 election later this year. Since our meeting we have also had a meeting with the Australian Electoral Commission to discuss ways to improve communication on the current rules on overseas voting to those already abroad or departing Australia for professional or personal reasons.

During our meeting you mentioned that there required to be a more comprehensive appraisal of the policies and legislation needed to lower barriers for Australians and Australian companies operating within the globalizing economy. Southern Cross Group members fully support this approach. One method to take this forward would be to establish an interdepartmental committee, pulling together relevant departments and



agencies such as DFAT, DIMA, FACS, Austrade *et al.* Input and guidance to such a committee from DPMC would be advantageous in establishing objectives, timelines and the action plans for reporting back by department.

Finally, the Southern Cross Group would welcome an opportunity to organise or host an event during a future visit overseas by the Prime Minister. As we mentioned, a visit by the Prime Minister to Brussels during 2002 would be an important opportunity to further Australian-European relations, and we would be pleased to assist in any way you consider appropriate. Our Group also has Committee members in other major cities around the world, including Washington and London, and could provide support in other locations.

The Southern Cross Group is keen to play a constructive role in advancing the interests of Australia within the international economy. If we can assist or if you require further information, do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to a continuing dialogue with the Government during 2002.

With best regards,

John Russell / Anne MacGregor