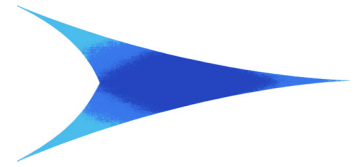


# The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community  
[www.southern-cross-group.org](http://www.southern-cross-group.org)



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Australians Urged to Comment on Citizenship Bill

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) today called upon Australians at home and abroad to let legislators in Canberra know their views on the *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* (the *Citizenship Bill*) by making submissions to a new Senate Inquiry by **Monday 16 January 2006**.

Submissions can be made through the SCG's website at:

[http://www.southern-cross-group.org/citizenship\\_bill/make\\_submission.html](http://www.southern-cross-group.org/citizenship_bill/make_submission.html)

The *Citizenship Bill* was tabled in the House of Representatives on 9 November 2005 by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon John Cobb MP. On 30 November 2005 the Senate referred it to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 27 February 2006.

Along with the *Australian Citizenship (Transitionals and Consequentials) Bill 2005*, the *Citizenship Bill* will replace the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*. It contains many of the citizenship reforms lobbied for by the SCG over several years on behalf of the Australian diaspora.

Key and very positive changes for those in the Australian community overseas include a simplified route to the resumption of citizenship lost on the acquisition of another citizenship before 4 April 2002 under the old Section 17. In addition, those who formally renounced under Section 18 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* in order to keep another citizenship in adulthood will be able to apply to resume their citizenship for the first time. The fundamental requirement for resumption will be that the person is of good character.

Further, certain people born overseas to Australian citizen parents who do not presently qualify to be Australian citizens by descent will be given access to Australian citizenship.

Provision has also been made in the *Citizenship Bill* to provide improved access to Australian citizenship for the non-Australian spouses of Australian citizens where the couple resides abroad and the non-Australian spouse is an Australian permanent resident. The non-Australian spouse will not have to fulfil the normal requirements for presence in Australia prior to applying for citizenship.

The SCG has however identified a number of issues which the Government has failed to include in the *Citizenship Bill*. Of greatest concern is the fact that children born overseas to Australian-born individuals after their formal renunciation of Australian citizenship under the current Section 18 are not being provided with access to Australian citizenship. In particular, this affects approximately 3000 children (average age of 10½) of some 2000 Australian-born people in Malta. If these children had had an Australian-citizen parent at the time of their birth, they would have been Australian citizens by descent.

This exclusion is unjust because children born overseas to people after they lost their citizenship under the now-repealed Section 17 (loss on acquisition of another citizenship) are being provided with access to Australian citizenship.

Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Senator Annette Hurley, has said that the ALP will be introducing an Opposition amendment into both the House and the Senate in an attempt to have Section 18 children included within the ambit of the *Citizenship Bill* when it is debated in Parliament in 2006. The Australian Democrats support this amendment.

Australians at home and overseas can support the inclusion of these children in the *Citizenship Bill*, and provide feedback on both the positive and negative aspects of the legislation by making submissions to the special Senate Inquiry on the *Citizenship Bill* through the SCG's website:

[http://www.southern-cross-group.org/citizenship\\_bill/overview.html](http://www.southern-cross-group.org/citizenship_bill/overview.html)

### **Further Information:**

Text of the *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005*:

<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/Repository/Legis/Bills/Linked/09110503.pdf>

Explanatory Memorandum on the *Citizenship Bill*:

<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/Repository/Legis/ems/Linked/09110503.pdf>

Australian Government Citizenship Website Explaining the *Citizenship Bill*:

[http://www.citizenship.gov.au/citz\\_bill\\_2005/index.htm](http://www.citizenship.gov.au/citz_bill_2005/index.htm)

Information on the Senate Inquiry into the *Citizenship Bill*:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon\\_ctte/citizenship/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/citizenship/index.htm)

SCG Website on Section 18 (Maltese) Children Issue:

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

Make an Affirmation of Australian Citizenship:

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

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*The Southern Cross Group is a global non-profit volunteer-run advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora.*

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