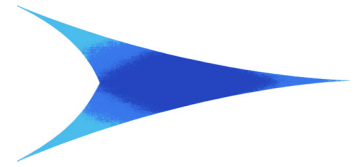


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community
www.southern-cross-group.org



MEDIA RELEASE

Citizenship Bill Expected in Parliament This Week

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) today welcomed the publication of the Government's proposed amendments to the *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* and urged Parliament to adopt the Bill without further delay.

The Bill is likely to be debated in the House of Representatives in Canberra this week, 16-19 October.

The SCG's Australian Co-ordinator John MacGregor said that it was now more than 27 months since the Government had made its pre-election promise to change Australian citizenship law to benefit many presently excluded from Australian citizenship in the Australian diaspora.

Beneficiaries of the Bill include many Australian-born women who married US servicemen and moved to the United States during or immediately post World War Two. A large number of these women forfeited their Australian citizenship when they later naturalised in the US. Those who survive will be able to apply to resume their Australian citizenship simply by showing good character once the present Bill becomes law and its provisions implemented.

"With each passing day, sadly, we are losing war brides in the US", he said. "They are all now in their eighties and nineties. Many have told us they wish to be Australian citizens again before they die. We very much hope that this legislation will pass both Houses before Parliament rises for the summer break. It would be pleasing indeed if this new legislation could be implemented on Australia Day 2007."

The SCG notes that none of the Government's proposed amendments published late last week will delete or amend the key expat-relevant provisions in the Bill as first tabled in November 2005.

The SCG welcomes the Government's plan to include a new Subdivision in the Bill which would provide a route to Australian citizenship for people adopted under the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. However, the SCG believes that this proposed amendment is limited in scope and will not provide access to Australian citizenship for a number of people adopted in the past or in the future by Australians living abroad under the adoption laws of other countries. By contrast, people born abroad who have a natural parent who is an Australian citizen generally have access to Australian citizenship by descent and the present Bill will extend the scope of the citizenship by descent provisions to fix a number of historical exclusions.

The SCG is on record as to how the Bill could have been more inclusive towards the Australian diaspora in a number of ways, but the Government has ignored most of those additional suggestions in the set of amendments just published.

More Information:

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

Government amendments published on 11 October 2006:

<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/Repository/Legis/Amend/Linked/12100602.pdf>

Australian Citizenship Bill 2005 as tabled on 9 November 2005:

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

Contacts:

In Australia

John MacGregor, mobile +61 418 621 918, sid@southern-cross-group.org

In the United States/Canada

Robyn Stephenson, +1 616 748 7993, robyn@southern-cross-group.org

In UK, Ireland and Continental Europe

Anne MacGregor, mobile +32 474 950 131, anne@southern-cross-group.org

About the Southern Cross Group

The Southern Cross Group is an international non-profit volunteer-run and independently-funded advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora. The SCG takes an inclusive approach in defining the Australian overseas community and works on behalf of everyone in that community, regardless of their age, educational background, occupation, professional status or income. Those who are not technically Australian citizens but who are former citizens or future citizens or otherwise have a very close family connection with Australia are also within the SCG's constituency. Since its formation in early 2000, the SCG has established a consistent track record of intelligent and timely submissions to Government on a host of Australian expatriate issues, taking the lead in establishing "the Australian diaspora" firmly in Australian domestic consciousness. The Group is best known for its work in reforming Australian citizenship law. It has also been active on the issue of expatriate disenfranchisement in the Australian electoral process, and was the driving force behind the establishment of a broad-based dedicated Federal Senate Committee Inquiry into Australian expatriates held in 2003-2005. The SCG is run by 100 volunteers in 30 countries. It has no formal members or membership fees. People interested in keeping abreast of the SCG's activities are invited to [sign up to its occasional free e-bulletins](#).

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

16 October 2006