

**Southern Cross Group
Primary Submission to Citizenship Bill Inquiry
20 January 2006**

E-mail Exchange with DFAT dated January 2006

From: MacGregor, Anne
Sent: 04 January 2006 12:46
To: 'rod.smith@dfat.gov.au'
Cc: 'sidmacg@hotmail.com'; Catherine Rawson (E-mail); Edward Smith (E-mail);
graham.fletcher@dfat.gov.au
Subject: Citizenship Inquiry - Flyer for Australian Missions

Dear Rod,

You may recall that myself and my father, John MacGregor, met you in Canberra in January 2003.

The Southern Cross Group has continued to work on various expat issues, and you may be aware that on 9 November, the *Australian Citizenship Bill 2005* was introduced into the House of Representatives. The Bill includes a number of expat "fixes" that will greatly benefit many in the Australian diaspora.

The Senate has referred the Bill to an Inquiry, and the deadline for submissions is **Monday 16 January 2006**. We are trying to publicise the inquiry (and the new Bill) to as many expats as possible, and to that end we have produced a one-page A4 flyer, which I attach.

We would like to get bundles of these flyers into the public/consular areas of all the Australian missions around the world, so that Australians who come in to a Mission for whatever reason can be alerted to the Inquiry, as well as to the forthcoming changes to the law, even if they miss the Inquiry submission deadline.

One of our volunteers in Beijing, Catherine Rawson, contacted Graham Fletcher at the Australian Embassy in Beijing earlier today, but I understand that Graham was hesitant to make our flyer available in the Embassy foyer without a specific instruction to do so from Canberra.

For that reason I am contacting you in the hope that you can issue such an instruction, not only concerning Beijing, but also for the other missions.

Time is obviously running short at this point, but the inquiry was only opened in early December, and we have had the Christmas/New Year holidays in the middle of our six-week window for submissions, with many expats away for two, three or four weeks at home in Australia, so we are trying to do everything we can to spread the word in the remaining 12 days. Even if our flyers sit around in public areas of missions past 16 January, I believe there will still be value in informing expats that changes to citizenship law are in the pipeline.

We do hope that you will be able to assist.

Kind regards,

Anne MacGregor
Co-founder
Southern Cross Group
Brussels
anne@southern-cross-group.org
www.southern-cross-group.org

From: Bassim.Blazey@dfat.gov.au [mailto:Bassim.Blazey@dfat.gov.au]
Sent: 06 January 2006 01:24
To: MacGregor, Anne; anne@southern-cross-group.org
Cc: sidmacg@hotmail.com; bob.nash@dfat.gov.au; Edward Smith (E-mail);
Graham.Fletcher@dfat.gov.au; Catherine Rawson (E-mail); Ken.Pascoe@dfat.gov.au;
Penny.Williams@dfat.gov.au; Susan.Cox@dfat.gov.au
Subject: Re: Citizenship Inquiry - Flyer for Australian Missions

Dear Ms MacGregor

Thank you for your email. We appreciate the effort of the Southern Cross Group in seeking to publicise the Senate Inquiry regarding the Australian Citizenship Bill 2005.

In terms of how embassies can contribute to informing Australians overseas about the inquiry, we think the best way would be for them to use official material produced by the Senate Committee itself and which is available on its website.

Accordingly, I have asked our post in Beijing to use this material in the most appropriate way to suite local circumstances to draw attention to the inquiry.

We are also advising other posts to use the Senate Committee's material as they judge appropriate to their own operating environments.

Sincerely

Bassim Blazey
A/g First Assistant Secretary
Passports, Consular and Public Diplomacy Division
DFAT

From: Anne MacGregor [mailto:anne.macgregor@skynet.be]
Sent: 06 January 2006 09:43
To: Bassim.Blazey@dfat.gov.au; Michael L'Estrange
Cc: bob.nash@dfat.gov.au; Graham.Fletcher@dfat.gov.au; Ken.Pascoe@dfat.gov.au;
Penny.Williams@dfat.gov.au; Susan.Cox@dfat.gov.au; MacGregor, Anne; Rod Smith
Subject: Info through Missions on Government Inquiries for Expats
Dear Michael,
Dear Bassim,

Can we assume that you have adequate systems in place in Consular in DFAT in Canberra henceforth to monitor all new Government inquiries that are opened, and to advise all missions to publicise such without delay when one is opened which has particular expat relevance?

Or will it remain incumbent upon the Southern Cross Group to contact you in every instance to make a request to you that missions publicise particular inquiries as has been made in the case of the present inquiry into the Citizenship Bill?

The fact that such a step for this inquiry was necessary at all is enormously disappointing in light of all the work that many of us put into the Senate Inquiry into Australian Expatriates in 2003-5 and the March 2005 Report and resulting recommendations that came out of that Inquiry. The Government's response to that report, due at the latest in September 2005, is still outstanding. Nevertheless I draw your attention to the Recommendations in Chapter 10 of that March 2005 Report:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/expats03/report/c10.pdf

It would seem to me that making information on Government inquiries available in the public areas of Australian missions overseas would be a small step which could be implemented on a permanent basis by DFAT immediately at minimal cost and inconvenience.

I personally and many other of our SCG volunteers over the years have invested considerable sums out of our own finances producing flyers for other inquiries in the past and paying for postage to send bundles of such flyers to various missions. This shouldn't be our job. Nevertheless, had we not undertaken that exercise in the context of the Expats Inquiry, I am sure that we would not have seen a total of 677 submissions received by that Inquiry. And that was an inquiry which was about Australian Expats, a subject which without question falls fairly and squarely within your remit. As I recall, all publicity about that inquiry which was made available in foyers/public areas of Australian missions for expats was SCG material. While I know that DFAT requested its missions to provide input to Canberra as part of DFAT's submission to the inquiry, the Department failed dismally to disseminate information to expats on an inquiry which was all about them.

We look forward to hearing from DFAT how it wishes to address this matter going forward.

Naturally, the red tape we have encountered with the Embassy in Beijing (which stands in contrast to the full cooperation and support we have received from various other posts in the last week or so and on previous occasions) will be fully documented in our forthcoming submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Citizenship Bill and may also be touched upon in media releases which the SCG puts out in the context of its current activities.

Our Australian Co-ordinator, John (Sid) MacGregor is in Canberra and available to discuss these matters with you at any time: Tel 02 6247 6952, sid@southern-cross-group.org. Alternatively I can be reached at the numbers below in Brussels.

Kind regards

Anne MacGregor