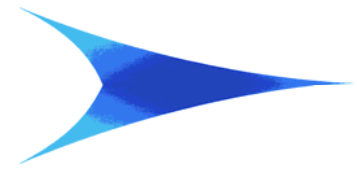


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community
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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian-born War Brides Gather in Washington for ANZAC Day

Women and their US-Born Children Soon to Qualify for Australian Citizenship

Next week, in an historic gathering on 24 and 25 April for ANZAC Day, some 90 surviving Australian-born war brides will make their way to Washington DC from all corners of the United States, where the Australian Embassy will pay tribute to their courageous spirit. These women, now all in their eighties and nineties, will be accompanied by over 200 spouses, children and grandchildren.

During World War II, almost a million US Marines, GIs and other military personnel passed through Australia during their service in the Pacific Theatre. They spent time in Australia on leave, in training camps and recuperating after being injured. Many formed relationships with local girls, resulting in some 15,000 Australian war brides joining their American husbands in the US during and just after the War.

Many of the war brides forfeited their Australian citizenship when they became naturalized US citizens in decades past. The new *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, due to come into force on 1 July 2007, will give them the right to apply to resume their Australian citizenship just by showing good character, thereby becoming dual citizens. The same legislation will give many of their children the right to apply for Australian citizenship for the first time.

Adelaide-born artist Patricia Feille, now 82, who lives in Austin, Texas, says that the tribute to brides in Washington by the Government is long overdue, and sadly, comes too late for many of the women. "In sixty years of living in the States I've never been contacted by the Australian consular authorities until I received this invitation," she said. "There were thousands of us Aussie girls who made our homes in the US after the war. I've felt like a forgotten creature for decades. I hope that Australia is mature enough now as a nation to be proud of all those in its diaspora. We all contribute". She is keen to resume her Australian citizenship.

Patricia met her late husband Edward in Sydney in April 1943 while she was serving as a stenographer for an Australian Army artillery unit. He was a US Air Force B17 bombardier, decorated with the Silver Star and the DFC for service in New Guinea. They married in St Andrews Cathedral in May 1943, after her husband-to-be told a journalist he was going to marry his Aussie sweetheart and she read about their engagement in the newspaper! In August 1943 she paid her way to the US, fortuitously missing an earlier boat that was torpedoed and went down at sea.

She and Edward had four children, three of whom are alive today and are looking forward to becoming Australian citizens. Daughter Margaret, born in the US in 1949, recalls being the only kid in the class at school growing up on a literary diet of Australian children's classics such as *Blinky Bill*, *Snugglypot and Cuddlepie*, and *Seven Little Australians*. She has always considered herself half Australian and becoming an Australian citizen later this year will be an emotional moment for her and her two sisters. US-born children of Australian war brides did not qualify for Australian citizenship by descent at the time of their birth because of historical sex discrimination in Australian law which meant that only fathers, and not married women, could pass citizenship on to their overseas-born children until 1970.

Information and Contacts

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To interview Australian-born war brides and their children, contact info@southern-cross-group.org.

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About the Southern Cross Group

The Southern Cross Group is an international non-profit volunteer-run advocacy and support organisation for the Australian diaspora. 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. 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 Australian Senate Committee Inquiry into Australian expatriates held in 2003-2005.