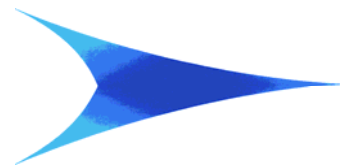


# The Southern Cross Group

*Promoting Mobility in the Global Community*



## MEDIA RELEASE

### 100,000 Eligible for Australian Citizenship Overseas

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) today welcomed the commencement on 1 July 2007 of the operative provisions of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*.

"We estimate that in the order of 100,000 individuals in the Australian diaspora are now newly eligible to apply for Australian citizenship under this significant and long-overdue reform of Australian citizenship legislation", said Anne MacGregor, SCG Co-founder in Brussels.

The number of applications actually expected under the new Act from abroad, however, is far fewer. Most of those eligible are unaware of the changes. Further, some who do know of the reforms may have no interest in applying for Australian citizenship in the foreseeable future.

Applicants living abroad fall into three main groups:

- **Resumption of Australian Citizenship** is possible for people who were previously Australian citizens, but who lost their citizenship in various ways. The SCG estimates that there are approximately 50,000 people globally who are now eligible for resumption. The vast majority were born in Australia.
- **Australian Citizenship by Descent** is possible for people born outside Australia on or after 26 January 1949 who had an Australian citizen parent at the time of their birth, regardless of their age now. Further, people born abroad before 26 January 1949 may apply for Australian citizenship by descent if their parent became an Australian citizen on 26 January 1949. The SCG estimates that in excess of 30,000 people around the world fall into this category.
- **Conferral of Australian Citizenship** is possible for people born outside Australia to a person who had automatically forfeited their Australian citizenship (due to the acquisition of another citizenship as an adult) prior to their birth. The SCG estimates that at least 15,000 individuals in the diaspora fall into this category.

All adult applicants must demonstrate good character.

The SCG has worked for the reforms contained in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* for seven years. In that time it has advised and supported several thousand families in the Australian diaspora on Australian citizenship matters, at no charge. The Group is a non-profit organization run by over 100 volunteers in more than 30 countries.

"Having worked so hard for so long to achieve this legislation, we want to make sure that as many people as possible can benefit under it. We are doing our best to guide and support many hundreds of citizenship applicants all over the world to the best of our ability within the limitations of our volunteer resources," said MacGregor.

"The Department of Immigration and Citizenship is not making it easy for people to apply under the new Act, and many in the diaspora, especially those who are elderly and infirm and/or do not have internet or e-mail, are already telling us that the hoops the Department wants them to jump through are a big deterrent."

"We hope that the Department has the required levels of properly trained staff in place to adequately deal with the expected increase in overseas citizenship applicants either in Australia or at overseas missions. The overly-burdensome practical arrangements it is imposing on many citizenship applicants seem designed to reduce the flow of applications."

Although the SCG has raised a number of practical and legal matters in writing directly with the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship the Hon Kevin Andrews MP in the weeks leading up to the Act's commencement, it has to date received incomplete responses, and none of them from the Minister himself.

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**Information for Australian Citizenship Applicants**

<http://www.citizenship.gov.au/>

**Citizenship Application Forms for use under the 2007 Act**

<http://www.citizenship.gov.au/law-and-policy/forms/index.htm>

***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.

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