

The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



The Hon Christopher Pyne, MP
Member for Sturt
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

10 December 2001

Dear Mr Pyne,

The Southern Cross Group is an international non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to representing the interests of Australians overseas. Our membership includes Australians in many countries and we have a broad network of contacts with many Australian expatriate groups around the world. Recently we have been active in pursuing the repeal of Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* so that all Australians may have the right to dual citizenship.

Apart from dual citizenship, the Southern Cross Group is active on a number of other matters which impact large numbers of the some 820,000 Australian citizens overseas. In particular, our Group is concerned with the limitations imposed in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* with regard to enrolment and voting by Australians overseas. Many Australian citizens overseas are no longer on the electoral roll and have no way of re-enrolling because they left Australia more than two years ago. In 1998, only approximately 65,000 Australians voted from overseas, although we estimate that there are around 610,000 Australians aged 18 or over living abroad. In the lead up to the election, many of our members have again expressed their dismay to us that they remain disenfranchised. Many of these individuals were also unhappy that they could not vote in the Referendum on the Republic in 1999.

While we understand that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has not yet been constituted following the federal election on 10 November, we understand it is likely that you will serve again on the JSCEM in 2002. We will both be in Australia during December, and wonder if a meeting could be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the concerns of Australian expatriates, and to provide you with a better understanding of the work of our organization.

Both the undersigned will be in Sydney from Monday 17 to Wednesday 19 December. In addition, we will be in Canberra on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 December. Anne MacGregor is presently in Canberra and can be reached at 02 6247 6952 or 0419 232 016 or by e-mail at anne@southern-cross-group.org. John Russell may be reached in Belgium until Friday 14 December at the address below or by e-mail at john@southern-cross-group.org.

We hope that there will be an opportunity for a meeting with you and look forward to a constructive dialogue with you during the term of the new Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Anne MacGregor / John Russell
SCG Co-founders
Washington DC and Brussels