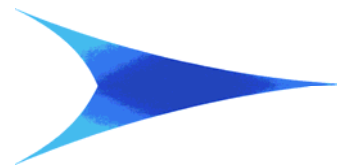


# The Southern Cross Group

*Promoting Mobility in the Global Community*



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Aussie Expats Urged to Have Say on Voting

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) today called upon all Australians living outside Australia to tell politicians their views and experiences on expatriate voting and enfranchisement as part of a special parliamentary inquiry.

The Australian federal parliament's [Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters](#) (JSCEM) is presently conducting an [inquiry into the conduct of the 2007 Federal Election](#).

The [terms of reference](#) for the inquiry are very broad and any person or organisation may make a submission.

E-mail submissions directly to the JSCEM can be made using the [special mailer facility on the SCG's website](#).

Submissions can also be made independently of the SCG's website to the following address:

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Department of House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Phone: 61 2 6277 2374  
Fax: 61 2 6277 4710  
email: [jscem@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscem@aph.gov.au)

The deadline for submissions to the JSCEM is **Friday 16 May 2008**.

The SCG's website carries a number of [discussion points and ideas for inclusion in submissions](#).

Expatriate disenfranchisement has been a focus of the SCG's advocacy efforts on behalf of overseas Australians since 2000 and the [SCG website carries full information on work to date and key issues](#).

Current Australian electoral law prohibits thousands of expats from exercising their democratic right to vote as Australian citizens. [Section 94A of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918](#) stipulates that those who are not on the electoral roll may only enrol from abroad if it is less than three years since they left Australia to live abroad. The SCG estimates that in the order of half a million expatriate Australian citizens are disenfranchised due to this limitation.

Although some one million Australians live abroad, only 70,059 votes were issued by overseas polling stations for the 2007 Federal Election, and many of those were to Australians who were on holidays or business trips abroad rather than resident overseas.

SCG co-founder in Brussels Anne MacGregor said "We hope that many expat Australians will use this opportunity to provide input on these important matters to the new Rudd government. In the past, a number of amendments to electoral law have come about as a result of JSCEM recommendations following such inquiries. The SCG is heartened by comments made by Prime Minister Rudd while in London in early April to the effect that greater numbers within our one million strong diaspora should be enfranchised."

Data on Australian expatriate enrolment and voting collected during 2006 as part of the One Million More Census of Australians Abroad (an initiative of Advance in partnership with the SCG) was [published by the SCG in a media release](#) prior to last year's federal election.

## **Contacts:**

John ("Sid") MacGregor in Canberra, +61 2 6248 9038, mobile +61 418 621918, [sid@southern-cross-group.org](mailto:sid@southern-cross-group.org)

Robyn Stephenson, in Michigan, USA, mobile +1 616 403 2819, [robyn@southern-cross-group.org](mailto:robyn@southern-cross-group.org)

Anne MacGregor in Brussels, Belgium, mobile +32 474 950 131, [anne@southern-cross-group.org](mailto:anne@southern-cross-group.org)

## ***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.

The SCG has no paid staff and is funded by donations which go towards offsetting overheads such as software licensing fees, web hosting costs, postage, stationery, and communications expense. [Please help the SCG by making a donation.](#)

For more information about the SCG, [click here](#). Contact us for advertising and marketing opportunities.

[www.southern-cross-group.org](http://www.southern-cross-group.org)

[info@southern-cross-group.org](mailto:info@southern-cross-group.org)

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