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HE Ms Del Higgie
New Zealand Ambassador to the European Union
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Your Excellency,

We are both Australians who have been living and working in Belgium for some years. Over the years we have become concerned at the implications of the fact that there is no bilateral social security agreement between Australia and Belgium. This effectively means that money contributed to the Belgian social security system by ourselves will never be of benefit to us if we retire to Australia. We understand that there is also no such agreement between New Zealand and Belgium.

After talking with other Australians in Belgium, we believe that this is an issue which needs to be addressed, along with several other subjects. Accordingly, we are planning to set up a small action group to work to achieve change on such issues. Other topics we intend to address include the status of third country nationals who are legally living in the EU under EU social security legislation, such as Regulation 1408/71, and dual citizenship rules. We have already met with Ambassador Don Kenyon to outline our thinking.

We believe that a group such as ours might well be of interest to New Zealanders living in Belgium as well, as many of the issues faced by New Zealanders are the same or similar. At this stage, we are planning to hold a first meeting to constitute our action group in Brussels on Tuesday 25 January 2000. Before that date, we are trying to reach as many Australians and New Zealanders in Belgium as possible, to tell them about our plans. We would be glad if you could circulate word of our group to any New Zealanders who might be known to you and put them in touch with us. We intend to mail an information letter to everyone we know of at this stage in the week beginning 3 January. We will also forward a copy of this letter to you.

We would also be very pleased to have an opportunity to meet with you and discuss any ideas you might have as to how a group such as ours might best work to achieve change on subjects such as social security. At present we are also monitoring proposals by the European Commission to include third country nationals within the framework of EU Regulation 1408/71.

We look forward to your response, and thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne MacGregor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anne MacGregor / John Russell