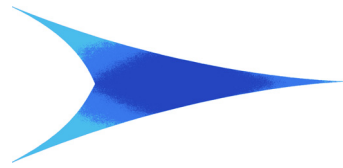


The Southern Cross Group

Promoting Mobility in the Global Community



12 October 2004

Forthcoming Changes to Australian Citizenship Law

Dear Australian War Brides,

Dear Children of Australian War Brides,

You are being contacted at this time because we believe that forthcoming amendments to Australian law may benefit you. If you are not presently an Australian citizen, changes on the horizon may soon allow you to become an Australian citizen and thereby enjoy the advantages of dual citizenship.

Who Are We?

The Southern Cross Group (SCG) is an independent, international, non-profit, entirely volunteer-run advocacy and support organisation for the approximately one million Australians (and former Australians) who live outside Australia. The SCG was formed in Brussels in early 2000, and since that time has lobbied Canberra to bring about various legislative and other reforms of benefit to the Australian diaspora. The citizenship law reforms you will read about below will largely come about as a result of the SCG's work. The SCG functions due to the efforts of its volunteers around the world. Small donations by those who appreciate its work help offset the Group's running expenses.

Forthcoming Australian Citizenship Law Reforms

On 7 July 2004 the Australian Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs announced planned changes to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*. The Minister's media release of that date be viewed on the internet at:

www.minister.immi.gov.au/cam/media/media04/h04128.htm

Simplified Resumption of Lost Australian Citizenship

Until 4 April 2002, when Section 17 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* was repealed, Australians who were naturalised abroad automatically lost their Australian citizenship. Since 4 April 2002, any Australian who acquires another citizenship does not forfeit their Australian citizenship under Australian law, opening the way for many Australian expats to become dual citizens.

Many Australian war brides in the United States (and other overseas Australians) who acquired US (and other) citizenship(s) on or after 26 January 1949 but before 4 April 2002 automatically forfeited their Australian citizenship on obtaining their new citizenship. We know that loss of Australian citizenship was a matter of great sadness for many.

Resumption of lost Australian citizenship is currently possible, but very difficult for those who remain resident outside Australia. Resumption is only possible at present if a person is prepared to make a declaration that they intend to move back to Australia to live within three years. Many whose lives are firmly rooted abroad feel that they cannot make this declaration. Thousands of individuals are in this situation, and the SCG has been lobbying for a simplified resumption provision for several years for this group of people.

Once the changes announced on 7 July 2004 become law, the only criterion for the resumption of Australian citizenship by people who lost their Australian citizenship when they acquired another country's citizenship will be that they are of good character.

Children of Former Australian Citizens

A number of changes have also been announced to benefit overseas-born children of Australian citizens and former Australian citizens. These are detailed by way of example in the attached information sheet. The changes will mean that many children born in the United States (and elsewhere outside Australia) to Australian-born parents will soon have new, or renewed, access to Australian citizenship. Significantly, many of the US-born children of Australian war brides will gain access to Australian citizenship when these reforms become law.

When Will the Changes Come into Force?

We stress that the 7 July 2004 announcement simply foreshadows planned legislative reforms. The law has not been amended yet. Due to the fact that the Liberal/National Coalition government has just been returned to office following the federal election held on 9 October 2004, we expect the necessary bill to amend the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* to be drafted and introduced into Parliament in early to mid 2005. The changes would then become law probably in mid to late 2005.

Now that the federal election is over, and as soon as we know who the Minister for Citizenship in the re-elected government will be, we will be stepping up advocacy efforts to keep the pressure on legislators in Canberra, so that the citizenship reforms will be kept firmly on the agenda over the next few months.

Help Us Keep You Up To Date

If you and others in your family wish to receive further mailings from us about Australian citizenship law changes over the coming months, whether by post or by e-mail, we ask you to complete the attached registration form(s) and return them to Ken Lankard, our SCG volunteer War Brides Co-ordinator, in California, contact details below. Do you know other Australian war brides and/or their children who may not know of the impending reforms? Please show them this material and ask them to complete a mailing list registration form as well. Additional forms can be downloaded from www.southern-cross-group.org or call Ken to have extra forms sent to you.

Still Have Questions?

If, after carefully reading this letter and the attached information sheet, you are still not clear exactly whether or how you will benefit from the planned citizenship reforms, we will gladly provide you with a short legal assessment of your individual case at no charge. Please fully complete and return the attached form(s) to us, marking in capital letters across the top: "INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT PLEASE". Please bear with us as our volunteers work through all the responses we receive.

Our War Brides Coordinator Ken Lankard is available should you have questions at any time. In addition, our website carries information specifically for Australian war brides and their children:

www.southern-cross-group.org/brides/overview.html

*Kind regards,
The SCG Volunteer Committee*