

Annex 15

Suggested Information for Migrants and Would-be Migrants

1. Information to be Made Available to those Inquiring about Possible Migration to Australia

The Southern Cross Group suggests that by way of early civics education for possible migrants to Australia, the Commonwealth should prepare a brochure which outlines in simple terms the basic structure of democratic government at the federal and state level. This should be available on the *www.immi.gov.au* and *www.aph.gov.au* websites and in hard copy from all overseas posts which process migrant visas, as well as at migration information expos and road shows held overseas.

The brochure might be developed in such a manner that it portrays our systems as a positive factor supporting a decision to apply for the right to migrate.

While the message would be relatively brief it should encourage people to seek more information from Australian government websites in their own language.

There should be a clear statement of the steps a successful migrant would need to follow once in Australia to achieve citizenship and to thus be able to participate fully in our democratic system by exercising the accompanying right to vote.

2. Information to be Made Available to those who are Issued with a Migration Visa

A brochure should be prepared for issue to successful applicants for migration visas along the following lines:

Congratulations on your decision to migrate to Australia.

We believe that one of the great strengths of the Australian way of life is the individual's right to participate fully in our democratic system. Even though your own personal rights will be limited to some extent until you become an Australian citizen and thus have the right to vote in our elections, there is much you can do to learn about our systems and quickly become a part of the Australian family.

Once you have arrived in Australia your day to day experiences and contacts with your support groups will begin to equip you with an understanding of our general customs and practices

What is not so easy to acquire is a sound knowledge of our systems of government and law and how you can become an effective part of those systems. It is in your interest to progressively prepare yourself to understand your rights and privileges once you become an Australian citizen.

Should you decide to become an Australian citizen, you will then enjoy the same rights as all other Australian citizens:

- Subject to the provisions of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, the right to enrol and vote to help elect Australia's governments at the federal, state and local level;
- The right to apply to nominate for election to Parliament (subject to s44 (i) of the Australian Constitution which prohibits dual citizens from standing for the Australian Parliament);
- The right to apply for an Australian passport and to leave and re-enter the country without a resident return visa;
- The right to seek assistance from Australian diplomatic representatives while overseas;
- The right to apply to enlist in the defence forces and for government jobs requiring Australian citizenship; and
- Subject to the provisions of Australia's citizenship laws, the right to register your children born abroad as Australian citizens by descent.

With citizenship, there are also certain responsibilities expected of all Australians. You will, for example, be required to:

- Obey the laws and fulfill your duties as an Australian citizen;
- Provided you live in Australia, enrol on the Electoral Roll and vote at Federal and State/Territory elections and referenda;

- Serve on a jury, if called on;
- Defend Australia, should the need arise.

These privileges and responsibilities are subject to the same rights and exemptions as Australian-born citizens.

To fully understand the rights and privileges an Australian citizen has relating to electoral matters, we suggest you refer to the following online information about the Australian systems of government and democracy at both the federal and state levels:

[List of relevant websites.]

As an Australian Resident, before you Become an Australian Citizen...

You will have no right to enrol or vote in Australian elections. Once you are an Australian citizen, however, if you live in Australia, enrolment and voting is compulsory. To find out more about Australian elections and voting, see www.aec.gov.au.

You may be able to vote in the elections held in your country of original citizenship while you live in Australia. Check with the nearest consular office of your country of citizenship.

Website Portal to Government Information

The Australian Government maintains a website portal www.australia.gov.au which will lead you to information pages maintained by the various government agencies. For an up-to-date coverage of the issues with which you may be concerned from time to time, you should consult the website on a regular basis.

Adult Civics and Electoral Education Courses

Adult civics and electoral education courses are held in Australia regularly and we invite you to participate whether or not you become an Australian citizen. For details of the course nearest you, visit **[website]**.

If you live outside a major city or town and cannot attend a course, distance-learning civics and electoral education materials are available online and by post.