



Dr. Peter Andry OAM

Friday, 19 December 2003

The Secretariat, Legal and Constitutional Reference Committee
Parliament House Canberra House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir

I have received today from The Southern Cross Group a Pamphlet entitled "Calling Australians Everywhere" regarding Australian expatriates. I am taking this opportunity to reply in view of my long experience as such an expatriate during almost 50 years of living abroad and yet retaining extremely strong ties to Australia.

I was awarded a British Council Bursary to continue studies abroad whilst working as an orchestral musician in Melbourne and Tasmania. My ambition after studying Music at Melbourne University and attaining a Mus Bac degree was to become a conductor and composer of Classical Music. I had had an opportunity through working ad hoc with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra to work with distinguished European conductors such as Otto Klemperer, Rafael Kubelik, Sir Eugene Goossens and others. These conductors and various other musicians had awakened in me as in many colleagues a desire to study further in Europe and to see what was going on in the post war period of the 1950's. I had a good job with the ABC as a music producer but the pull to go further afield after ten years as a player and then the ABC was too strong. Hence I resigned having been given a warm recommendation by my then manager that I could have my job back any time!

I arrived in England in March 1953 and became immediately involved in musical life, which then seemed to be teeming with new opportunities of all sorts. I studied conducting, was sent to see and meet interesting personalities with Sir Adrian Boult as my mentor, did a bit of playing in London as a freelance musician and took on a tour from there with a ballet company travelling around Britain and Ireland. A friend James Walker, an excellent Australian musician who was the principal conductor of the *International Ballet* allowed me to conduct matinees in the provinces. When the ballet job ended James Walker became a music producer with the Decca Record Company then a burgeoning company with many international connections. He suggested that I should come along to Decca in view of my experience as a musician and my work with broadcasting, which would fit the requirements for an extra hand. Decca had a very full diary of recordings in Vienna, Paris, Geneva, Berlin, Bayreuth

and especially of course in London. Stereo recording was looming on the horizon, which necessitated many more recordings to fill the new catalogue. Thus I became absorbed into the Recording business that was to occupy my life for the next 40 years. I met many expatriate Australian friends in London, including my friend and colleague Douglas Whittaker who had become the Principal flute at Sadlers Wells Opera, Geoffrey Parsons the par excellence pianist and accompanist who was later to take on the mantle of the doyen accompanist of singing stars, Gerald Moore, and the conductor Sir Charles Mackerras who became a lifelong friend and supporter. I became a regular visit to Australia House and was involved in the Australian Music Society giving small concerts there. The Australian Embassy was always a magnet for expatriates and the various High Commissioners, none more than the present incumbent H.E. Mr. Michael L'Estrange, were kind enough to treat me most courteously and to let me help in musical matters.

I was asked to join a new private venture called the Australian Music Foundation (in London). The chairman was Lord Goodman the eminent lawyer, other Trustees among them Sir Douglas Bader. However none of them were musicians. The creator of the Foundation Mr. Sam Lynn a British businessman of considerable wealth asked me to become his advisor and I became a Trustee. Since Mr. Lynn's death some years ago and after some nearly thirty years running the Foundation now as Deputy Chairman I still hold this position with much pleasure. I began to organise large scale concerts for the Foundation with Dame Joan Sutherland and all the main Australian stars of the day and expanded this to include Rolf Harris, Dame Edna Everage and every Australian of note such as John Williams, Malcolm Williamson etc., whom I could rope into the equation to give exposure to our brilliant roster of Australian talent of which there has always been a relatively small but highly visible supply. To date there have been seven major concerts given by the Foundation, four of them having been attended by HRH Prince Charles in various venues such as The Royal Opera House Covent Garden as recently as 2002. I occupied myself with many other interesting ventures, apart from a very busy life in EMI whom I had joined in 1956 as a music Producer and had risen slowly to be the head of that company's Classical Division ending as its President. I became involved in running the Royal Philharmonic Society, was Chairman of Music Therapy Charity for over 15 years, a member of Royal Societies of Arts Council and was made an honorary member of the Royal College of Music.

As a point of interest in this rather long peroration of my life abroad I did have the opportunity of returning to Australia as head of the Sydney Opera I was offered this position by the then Chairman Charles Berg. I declined this although much intrigued by the idea however a unique and wonderful position within the record industry and pension arrangements being extremely sketchy in Sydney made this a dangerous experiment in view of a family, which by that time I had in England.

Many Australians with a modicum of experience and full of go ahead ideas have come to England and have gone further abroad to become executives in worthy enterprises. The Australian character is less concerned with style and lends itself to proactive working conditions rather than more conservative Europeans. This is demonstrated by the ever increasing number of CEO's and other Australian business leaders who have found acceptance in the UK due to the more aggressive style they adopt to problem solving and adapting this to their given work.

It is the ever-increasing range of interests that Europe offers to the Australian Expatriate that keeps those who have found lucrative and rewarding positions over

here. Australia still has a relatively small circle of opportunities to pursue in order to reward an early return. I speak of course mainly here of the Arts as in my case. There is no denying gradually the magnetic pull of Australia as a country of opportunity, space and fresh ideas for anyone who cares to look seriously at the comparisons with Europe, USA and the Far East. What has been a point of discussion for many Australians abroad is the gradual "tainting" of expatriates in the eyes of Australians who have not gone abroad. In other words, where a possibility arises that experience and a wealth of know how could be applied to working in Australia there is definitely a bias against the 'return of the native' when it comes to using their expertise at home. The Aussie will say, "Who does he think he is". This was a point, which came home to me strongly when I was sent by the Australian Music Foundation to arrange a possible Royal Gala in Sydney during the Olympics where every excuse was made to prevent this happening. People there felt very much afraid of protecting their own patch of experience. This being so in the Arts I would think that it is likely to exist in other endeavours.

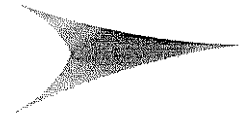
I have felt for a long time that possibly a call from someone over there who might feel that we 'experts' have something to offer Australia would be a heaven sent signal. In our case, such as the Foundation the opposite has obtained. We have offered as incentives and spent more than £20,000 per annum to help young Australians to increase their knowledge. Connecting them with life abroad and advertising in different ways is what we have to offer as well as seeking performing opportunities. We have plenty of postgraduate students who wish to accept our stipends over here but there is very little recognition of our work in Australia.

The needs and concerns of overseas Australians are very much of still wanting desperately to be connected to their homeland despite the blandishments of a life full of stimulating work over here. Perhaps The Government in Canberra can look into giving expatriates such as myself, retired and yet still active (I am 77 and still lead a life devoted to serving several charities) an opportunity of becoming visiting fellows in Australia to spread the word of what we have done and what can be achieved. It need not cost all that much – it may be money well spent. It does not need to relate only to the Arts, which defines my experience, but people who have been at the cutting edge are often happy to share their experiences with fresh minds in other places. A bold approach following this enquiry would widen our mutual views and experience.

Yours truly

John Armitage

The Southern Cross Group
Promoting Mobility in the Global Community
www.southern-cross-group.org



Calling Australians Everywhere.

The Australian Senate's Legal and Constitutional References Committee has opened a **Parliamentary Inquiry into Australian Expatriates**. The Committee's terms of reference are as follows:

- (a) the extent of the Australian diaspora;
- (b) the variety of factors driving more Australians to live overseas;
- (c) the costs, benefits and opportunities presented by the phenomenon;
- (d) the needs and concerns of overseas Australians;
- (e) the measures taken by other comparable countries to respond to the needs of their expatriates; and
- (f) ways in which Australia could better use its expatriates to promote our economic, social and cultural interests.

Some one million Australians live abroad. That's equivalent to 5% of Australia's resident population. Yet never before in Australia's history has the Government formally examined our diaspora. Whether you are an Australian overseas or an Australian at home, this is a unique opportunity to put forward your thoughts, experiences, views and concerns. Through your participation in this inquiry, you can help shape and enrich the future of our country so that Australian expatriates can become better connected and integrated into the life of our nation, for the benefit of all Australians.

Whether you contribute three lines or a thesis, make sure your voice is heard. Ideas, background reading, and an e-mail template in which you can compose your submission and send it direct to the Committee can be found at:

www.southern-cross-group.org

Or make your submission directly to:

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Tel: +61 2 6277 3560 Fax: + 61 2 6277 5794
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Closing Date: Friday 27 February 2004

Australia. Have your say. It's your country too.