

[Name withheld]

Dear Sir/Madam,

This submission is in response to the invitation for public comment as part of the Committee's Inquiry into Australian Expatriates.

I am a 26 year-old Australian female, and I left Australia to live in Atlanta, Georgia, United States approximately 1 ½ years ago.

I was born in Australia, and both my mother and father are Australian. I lived in Australia until age 24. In 2001 I visited the USA for a 2-month holiday to visit my partner, a (currently) 27-year-old Australian who relocated from Australia in 2001 to start a PhD in the states. During this visit I accepted an employment position, and my employer was willing to sponsor me for a temporary employment Visa. I returned home to Australia for a couple of months, the time it took for the Visa application to be processed, and then packed up my bags and left to continue my life in the USA, as an aussie expat.

The single factor that drove me to leave Australia for the United States was because my Australian partner had left Australia for the states. He left Australia to accept a scholarship to complete a PhD at an American university, in the Computer Information Systems field. He plans to pursue an academic position at a university in the United States after finishing his PhD. The reasons for staying in the States, rather than returning to Australia are twofold - one is depth of academic research in his field in the USA and the other is the much higher salaries on offer for assistance professors (double that available in Australia).

The terms of reference mention the needs of overseas Australians. I would count among my needs, regular communication with my family and friends in Australia, visits back to Australia (about once a year give the time, cost and distance involved), continued interaction with other expatriate Australians, access to Australian food, news sources, and music.

- Without doubt, the most difficult aspect of living overseas is being away from my family and friends. My ties with both family and friends were very strong, and I try to keep these ties through telephone, email and letter contact. I have also returned to Australia once so far for one week to visit family and friends.

- The second most difficult aspect is missing the Australian culture and way of life. Now that I am amongst Americans, I realize that there is an Australian culture that is very deeply engrained in me. From a cup of tea and vegemite on toast in the morning, to John Farhnam and Kylie Minogue, to "G'day Mate" and "How are you going?", to Beaches and a Sunburnt country... I am Australian. The want and need for my Australian roots, is somewhat fulfilled by my active membership in the Australian Women's Association (in Atlanta), the Australia American New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (in Atlanta), the Young Australian Professional Association (USA), and Southern Cross (Global Expats). In Atlanta, I've attended the ANZAC ceremony, an Australia Day function, and a Queens Birthday celebration. There is a great Australian Bakery in Atlanta that supplies meat pies, and I cook Australian food at home by shopping for ingredients at international food stores.

- The internet is also a lifeline for my existence as an Aussie expat. Everyday I click on the www.news.com.au website to read the Australian news. I probably know more about the current news in Australian, than in the USA. I also tune into a Perth radio station each day at work, via the Internet. This allows me to listen to music and news that I am familiar with, as an Australian.

One of my concerns as an Aussie Expats is which government (Australia) or United States, is responsible for public services such as my or my families' health, retirement assistance, and education. Once I leave Australia for more than a few years, am I still eligible for Australian government services, such as health cover, financial assistance (pensions, unemployment benefits)? Another concern is that when moving to the USA, I had to start over again in terms of establishing a good driving record, and credit ratings, and may have to do this again when I move back to Australia.

I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia. I congratulate Australia on its efforts to harmonize the Australian accounting standards with international Accounting standards, as this will make Australia's workforce of more value globally.

The benefits of being an Expat include learning how wonderful Australia is compared to other places in the world. Learning new cultures and to make a life within them is an enriching experience.

It is clear that Australia needs a policy to gain some benefit from its Australian's overseas. I support Australia, and want it to continue to thrive so that when I return, it remains as great as when I left. There is no clear or obvious path to support Australia while away. This is something that the policy makers should consider. It should not necessarily be just monetary in nature.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this important study.

[Name withheld]
February 25, 2004