

CHAPTER 8

MEASURES TAKEN BY OTHER COUNTRIES REGARDING THEIR EXPATRIATES

Introduction

8.1 The Committee received evidence regarding measures taken by other countries in addressing the issues surrounding their expatriates. Earlier chapters of this report have already addressed how some other countries deal with arrangements for voting by expatriates in elections (Chapter 5), and census policy and counting the number of expatriates (Chapter 3).

8.2 This chapter looks further at some measures taken by other countries in dealing with expatriates, including:

- legislative representation of expatriates;
- representative bodies for expatriates, sponsored by government;
- identification cards;
- award schemes;
- schemes to encourage the return of expatriates; and
- other measures.

Legislative representation of expatriates

8.3 The Committee received evidence of several countries that provide for some form of representation of expatriates in their national legislatures.

8.4 The upper house of the French Parliament, the Senat, includes 12 senators elected to represent the interests of expatriates. The senators are elected indirectly by French expatriates, who initially elect 150 members of the Senior Council of the French Abroad, who in turn elect the 12 senators.¹

8.5 Portugal's Parliament includes four seats for representatives of Portuguese expatriates. Expatriates vote by mail for representatives in two 'emigration

1 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 'Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin', Document 8339, 5 March 1999, p. 13; SCG, *Submission 665*, p. 141.

constituencies', 'Europe' and 'outside Europe'.² The legislature of Croatia also has seats reserved for expatriates' representatives.³ Since 2001, Italy has allowed voters abroad to register and vote for 12 representatives in its lower house of Parliament and six in the upper house.⁴

8.6 Some submissions suggested that Australia too should have a special overseas electorate or dedicated seats for Australian expatriates.⁵ Professor George Williams suggested that a special Senate seat could be created to represent overseas Australians.⁶ However, one expatriate was not supportive of the idea of special representation:

I am aware that there have been suggestions in the past that expatriates should have 'reserved' seats in Parliament, but in my view this could lead to resentment on the part of the broader electorate that non-residents could perhaps have great influence on the outcome of an election (especially in a close result). This might only lead to the marginalisation of the views of expatriates when the aim is to bring them into the mainstream.⁷

8.7 The JSCEM report, *The 2001 Federal Election*, considered proposals made to that Committee regarding the creation of an overseas electorate to represent expatriate Australians.⁸ The Committee notes that the JSCEM report raised a number of concerns with the proposal for a special overseas electorate, including constitutional issues.⁹ The AEC's submission to that inquiry noted that legal opinion would need to be sought on whether the proposal would be achievable under the Constitution, and that a referendum may be necessary.¹⁰ The Committee notes that constitutional change in Australia has been historically difficult to achieve.

2 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 'Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin', Document 8339, 5 March 1999, p. 13.

3 *ibid.*

4 JSCEM report, p. 73.

5 Mr Simon Robinson, *Submission 79*, p. 2; Ms Sharon Readon, *Submission 196*, p. 2; Mr Andrew Wettern, *Submission 457*, p. 2; *Submission 466*, p. 5; AustCham Beijing, *Submission 637*, p. 4.

6 *Committee Hansard*, 27 July 2004, p. 52.

7 Dr Brian Simpson, *Submission 544*, p. 2.

8 JSCEM report, pp.73-74.

9 *ibid.*

10 AEC, *Submission 181* to the JSCEM inquiry into the 2001 Federal Election, p. 7.

Expatriates' representative bodies sponsored by government

8.8 Expatriates all over the world get together to form groups in order to further particular aims, such as social interaction, exchange of information, increased economic opportunities and advocacy. Most of these groups receive no government support. The Committee received evidence of a number of countries where governments do play a role in sponsoring and/or funding bodies set up to represent the interests of expatriates.

France

8.9 French expatriates are represented by the Senior Council of the French Abroad, which was established by the French Government in 1948.¹¹ This organisation includes 150 members elected by electorally-registered French expatriates, and acts as an advisory body attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is this Council which elects the 12 senators to the French Senat¹² who have responsibility for representing the interests of expatriates, as mentioned previously.

8.10 The SCG advised that the Council comprises a permanent office and a number of committees, and its members can be elected to some national boards. The Council also reports to the French Government on its research into problems that affect French expatriates.¹³

8.11 The SCG put up this type of representative body as a model that Australia may wish to consider for an Australian equivalent body, but without the provisions in the French body for election of expatriate-dedicated members to the French Senat.¹⁴

Greece

8.12 In Greece, the government-initiated World Council of Helenes Abroad is a coordinating body which looks after the interests of Greek expatriates. The body is independent of the Greek Government, but its activities are overseen by the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad, a public body which is answerable to the Ministry of

11 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 'Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin', Document 8339, 5 March 1999, p. 15.

12 *ibid*, p. 13.

13 *Submission 665*, Appendix M, p. 7.

14 *ibid*, pp. 7-8.

Foreign Affairs.¹⁵ The Secretariat is well-staffed, with a number of divisions to address the issues of expatriates in different parts of the world.¹⁶

8.13 The principal aims of the Secretariat include maintenance of the cultural and ethnic identity of Greek expatriates, and ensuring the smooth reintegration of Greek expatriates who return to Greece.¹⁷ The Secretariat plans and implements policy initiatives for its expatriates, and also:

- provides economic assistance to organisations of Greeks abroad;
- sponsors and publishes scientific research on expatriate issues; and
- provides information to returning Greek expatriates on issues such as pensions, insurance, and legal and other issues that may be of concern in the repatriation process.¹⁸

Switzerland

8.14 Some submissions noted the approach taken in Switzerland.¹⁹ There the Council of the Swiss Abroad (a private foundation, but largely funded by the Swiss Government) represents the interests of Swiss expatriates in dealings with Swiss authorities and parliament, and provides various services.²⁰ The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad publishes (six times a year) the 'Swiss Review – Magazine for the Swiss Abroad', which is sent to all Swiss expatriates registered with their consulates. This publication provides legal information and news from Switzerland, and provides a vehicle for the Swiss Government to include their expatriate citizens in the national mainstream.²¹

8.15 Ms Linda Reeb gave information regarding other activities of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad:

15 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 'Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin', Document 8339, 5 March 1999, pp. 16-17.

16 See organisation chart of the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad at <http://www.ggae.gr/ggae/chart.en.asp> (accessed 18 October 2004).

17 Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 19 December 2001, p. 319. Available at <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>.

18 *ibid.*

19 Ms Linda Reeb, *Submission 545*, p. [7]; Ms Jo Ann Ray, *Submission 370*, p. 25.

20 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 'Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin', Document 8339, 5 March 1999, p. 15.

21 See <http://www.revue.ch/en/content/> (accessed 15 September 2004).

The Organisation for Swiss Abroad provides direct advice and input to the parliament on matters pertaining to the 10% of the Swiss population who reside overseas.

They provide a central link to Swiss government departments, services, Consuls etc, internationally based social and professional clubs for Swiss expatriates.²²

8.16 Ms Jo Ann Ray submitted that Australia could learn from the Swiss example, and emphasised the positive outcomes and connectivity that could result from adopting such an approach:

... the flow of information will improve connectivity with home, so that it becomes a win-win situation, both for the expatriates themselves, so that the sense of isolation is minimised, as well as for government agencies in trying to keep expatriates informed of their rights and obligations and their ability to make best use of the skills and offerings expatriates can provide.²³

India

8.17 In India, a dedicated research facility, the Centre for the Study of the Indian Diaspora, has been established at the University of Hyderabad.²⁴ The Indian Government issues an identity card for 'Persons of Indian Origin'. This card is discussed further later in this chapter.

8.18 The Committee notes the initiative of the Indian Government's Ministry of External Affairs in appointing a 'High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora', which reported in 2001 after examining the issues surrounding its own expatriates, and looking at measures taken by other countries. The Indian Committee found that there would be great benefit from the establishment of a 'single window contact mechanism' for dealing with expatriates and to meet their needs, rather than forcing expatriates to deal with the 'maze' of Indian bureaucracy.²⁵

Ireland

8.19 Ireland, with a long history of emigration, has recognised the possible benefits of attracting skilled expatriates to return, and has attempted to develop a database of expatriates and their skills.²⁶ Ireland also recognises that many of its emigrants to

22 *Submission 545*, p. [8].

23 *Submission 370*, p. 25.

24 *Submission 665*, p. 148.

25 Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 19 December 2001, p. 537. Available at <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>

26 Hugo report, p. 61.

Britain are in need of welfare support, and the Irish Government provides grants to assist voluntary organisations who provide services to these expatriates.²⁷ In 2001 the Irish Government set up a 'Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants' to develop a coherent long-term approach to Irish emigrants and their needs.²⁸ The report of the Task Force entitled *Ireland and the Irish Abroad* recommended:

The adoption of a strategic and integrated approach to meeting the needs of the Irish Abroad which includes policy objectives, an action plan and the necessary structures and resources to achieve these ends.²⁹

8.20 Specific recommendations included the establishment of a new structure within the Department of Foreign Affairs, the "Agency for the Irish Abroad", to coordinate the provision of services for Irish expatriates. Also recommended was the allocation of increased funding to voluntary agencies and programs abroad which provide welfare services to Irish people who are vulnerable or excluded, and the establishment of an awards scheme to recognise Irish people abroad.³⁰ Information available suggests that none of the recommendations have been implemented,³¹ with the Irish Government citing budgetary constraints.³²

Other countries

8.21 The governments in several other countries are involved in some way with representative expatriate organisations. The following information outlines some of the arrangements for a sample of countries:

- In Italy, the government-initiated General Council of Italians Abroad, which is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, advises the Italian Government on issues affecting Italian expatriates, and prepares an annual report which is presented to Parliament.³³ The Italian Government also

27 See website of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs at <http://foreignaffairs.gov.ie/information/display.asp?ID=1238> (accessed 18 October 2004).

28 *ibid.*

29 *Ireland and the Irish Abroad*, Report of the Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, August 2002, p. 3.

30 *ibid.*, p. 4.

31 See <http://www.politics.ie/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=4021>.

32 Tye McMahon, "The Australian Diaspora", report prepared for Australian National Internship Program, April 2004, p. 31.

33 Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 19 December 2001, p. 323. Available at <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>. Information also available from Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 'Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin', Document 8339, 5 March 1999, p. 16.

encourages a network of 'Committees of Italians Abroad', which, amongst other things, promotes cultural and economic ties with Italy.³⁴

- Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs includes a special cell to handle issues relating to Japanese expatriates.³⁵ The Japanese Government holds annual conferences in Tokyo in relation to Japanese people living abroad.³⁶
- South Korea has a 'Committee of Korean Residents Abroad', which includes the Prime Minister and other ministers amongst its 15 members.³⁷ The 'Overseas Koreans Foundation', a statutory body, holds conferences for expatriates and has websites for expatriates. As well as promoting cultural linkages, the Korean body has a focus on involving its expatriates in the economic development of South Korea.³⁸
- Poland acknowledges its expatriates in its Constitution, which obliges the Polish Government to help Poles living abroad to maintain their links with Poland's cultural heritage. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs includes a Department for Polonia (the Polish expatriate community) which disseminates information on developments within Poland and encourages maintenance of cultural and economic links. Both houses of the Polish Parliament have committees dedicated to addressing issues relating to Polish expatriates.³⁹

8.22 The Committee notes that many of the countries which have formal arrangements for dealing with expatriates are countries that either have a long history of emigration, or are developing countries that have a strong interest in encouraging expatriates to contribute financially or professionally to expanding the economy of the home country.

Identification cards for expatriates

8.23 The SCG drew the Committee's attention to the Indian Government strategy of issuing an identification card to 'Persons of Indian Origin'.⁴⁰ The Person of Indian

34 Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 19 December 2001, p. 323. Available at <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>.

35 *ibid*, p. 327.

36 *ibid*.

37 *ibid*, p. 329.

38 *ibid*.

39 *ibid*, p. 351.

40 *Submission 665*, p. 156.

Origin card (PIO card) is issued to expatriate Indians (and their children, spouses and others) who are holders of passports of another country. The card entitles the holder to some concessions, including the waiver of the requirement for a visa to enter India, parity with 'non-resident Indians' regarding transfer of property, and special counters at immigration entry points.⁴¹ Individuals are required to register for the card, and pay a fee (currently AU\$570 for applicants in Australia).⁴²

8.24 The Committee notes the suggestion of the SCG that consideration be given to the development of an identification card for Australian expatriates. However, as mentioned earlier in this report, the great majority of expatriate Australians do not currently register with DFAT's online register of Australians overseas. There may be a reluctance to register for any identification card, for a number of reasons. The Committee does not support this proposal.

Awards for expatriates

8.25 Some countries have schemes for making special awards to their expatriates. In 2003, New Zealand instituted the annual 'World Class New Zealander Award' to recognise expatriate New Zealanders making an outstanding contribution to the economic development of the country.⁴³ The award is sponsored by government agency Industry New Zealand, and is in association with the 'World Class New Zealander Programme', which aims at developing business talent in New Zealand.⁴⁴

8.26 Lebanon has a scheme for decorating distinguished persons of Lebanese origin who have settled in other countries.⁴⁵ The Philippines recognises expatriates who have made a contribution to the welfare of fellow expatriates by making awards of a small monetary gift, and free tickets to visit their home country.⁴⁶

8.27 The SCG has advocated the establishment of an award for 'Australian Expatriate of the Year', arguing that:

The creation and announcement of a new "Expatriate Australian of the Year" award could be used as a launching pad for improved activities with regard to the Australian diaspora. It would be a symbolic gesture and the

41 Indian High Commission to Australia website http://www.highcommissionofindiaaustralia.org/PIO_pg_.htm (accessed 12 October 2004).

42 *ibid.*

43 See <http://www.investnewzealand.govt.nz/section/3140/5294.aspx> (accessed 14 October 2004).

44 *ibid.*

45 Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 19 December 2001, p. 385. Available at <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>.

46 *ibid.*

event could mark the beginning of formal recognition of the Australian diaspora.⁴⁷

8.28 Expatriate Australian Ms Ellen Browning supported the idea of an award, submitting that:

Expatriate Australian of the Year - a fantastic idea for expatriates as well as those remaining in Australia. It would show them that expats can really contribute to Australia, not detract from it.⁴⁸

8.29 The Committee considers there would be some merit in recognising the achievement of Australian expatriates.

Schemes to encourage the return of expatriates

8.30 Some submissions to the Committee gave information regarding schemes in other countries to encourage the return of expatriates to their home country, including schemes that offer financial incentives. The submission of AustCham Beijing advised that China has policies to encourage and fund skilled and educated expatriates to return home to establish businesses.⁴⁹ Some Chinese provinces offer a range of incentives to encourage return migration, including generous salary packages and expense paid trips.⁵⁰

8.31 The Australian and New Zealand Business Association in Taiwan informed the Committee of financial incentives offered by some countries:

... a range of tax benefits, scholarships, are being offered by newly industrialized countries like Israel, China, Malaysia, Ireland etc. They may cover land concessions, investment subsidies and a range of incentives for starting new business. They are provided to entice expatriate talents back to the home country to generate new job opportunities.⁵¹

8.32 Professor Hugo questioned the merit of financial incentives as a way of encouraging the return of expatriates, suggesting that it would be preferable to create a favourable environment for returning:

47 SCG submission to the National Australia Day Committee, 24 September 2002, available at <http://www.southern-cross-group.org/expataustralian/intro.html>; see also SCG, *Submission 665A*, p. 1.

48 *Submission 277*, p. 4.

49 AustCham Beijing, *Submission 637*, p. [3].

50 Hugo report, p. 64.

51 *Submission 590*, p. 3.

... there may be ways of matching particular needs in the Australian economy with particular Australians overseas and then creating an environment which makes it favourable for them to come back.⁵²

8.33 Professor Hugo referred to return migration policies in some European countries, telling the Committee of policies which:

... almost entirely are targeted at specific groups: people with particular skills which are seen to be in demand in the economy. They are almost talent search type programs rather than return migration types of programs. Certainly European countries are engaging in this process in a very substantial way.⁵³

8.34 One submission gave the example of operating grants given to Canadian researchers, which had the effect of encouraging Canadians to develop their professional careers in Canada. Mr James Danckert, an Australian neuroscientist living in Canada, felt there was a large imbalance between the funding accorded to elite athletes in Australia, and funding for scientific research. He submitted that:

Were Australia to redress this kind of imbalance and start funding researchers at a level that would allow them to produce their best work and compete on the international stage I have no doubt I would return in an instant.⁵⁴

8.35 The Committee notes that various schemes are already in place in Australia to encourage the return of academics, such as the Federation Fellowship scheme and the Queensland Government Smart Returns Fellowship Scheme. These and other approaches are discussed in Chapter 9, while the broader issue of general repatriation incentives was considered in Chapter 6.

Other measures

Registers of expatriates

8.36 Some countries attempt to maintain registers of their citizens living abroad, for various reasons, including facilitating protection, especially during times of crisis. After criticism of its failure to efficiently identify how many of its nationals were killed or injured in the events of September 11 2001 in the US, the Japanese Government is setting up a new agency to keep track of its expatriates and keep them

52 *Committee Hansard*, 28 July 2004, p. 8.

53 *ibid*, p. 5.

54 *Submission 352*, p. 2.

informed during crises.⁵⁵ Ireland has attempted to develop a database of expatriates and their skills.⁵⁶

8.37 As noted in Chapter 3, DFAT currently maintains an online register of Australians overseas for Australians living, and travelling, overseas. As also noted, it is estimated that only 14 per cent of Australians residing overseas choose to register, for various reasons. Privacy issues are a factor to consider in the development of any registers.⁵⁷

Measures to facilitate economic development

8.38 For some countries, remittances by expatriates are an important source of development funds. Several countries are considering measures such as preferential banking advantages and high interest rates to capture more foreign exchange from their expatriates.⁵⁸

8.39 Direct investment by expatriates in home country enterprises is important in countries such as China and Taiwan, where recent economic growth has been strongly influenced by investment from a large number of expatriates.⁵⁹

8.40 From the submissions received, the Committee is aware that many of its expatriates maintain investments in Australia. The approaches of InvestAustralia, as considered in Chapter 9, may encourage more to do likewise.

55 Hugo report, p. 60.

56 *ibid*, p. 61.

57 *ibid*.

58 *ibid*.

59 *ibid*, p. 62.

