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# REGIONAL NEWS

## OCEANIA

Please note:  
Next Editorial Deadline  
27 August 2020



**ROLAND ISLER**  
REGIONAL EDITOR | OCEANIA  
COUNCIL OF THE SWISS ABROAD | AUSTRALIA

### Editorial:

Dear readers, dear compatriots,

COVID-19 has affected everyone around the world. Within a few weeks everything changed – the way we work, how we interact with each other, how we teach our children and look after the elderly. From large-scale events like the Olympics to the social gatherings of our Swiss community – all had to be cancelled or postponed and instead social distancing is the order of the day.

Oceania has been spared the full brunt of the pandemic as seen in Europe and elsewhere, but the economic impact is immense. Many suffer through isolation and financial hardship and now, more than ever, we need to look after ourselves, each other and the ones in our community. And let's not forget those that are still recovering from the fires.

It was previously advised that edition 4/2020 of the «Swiss Review» will appear as an online version only. Please note that this decision has been reversed and printed copies will be made available as per normal. Edition 4 and 6 do not have regional pages, therefore issue 5 will be the last one this year to include the «Regional News Oceania».

Following are the «Swiss Review/Regional Edition Oceania» dates for the remaining issues for this year:

	Editorial deadline	Publication date
■ Issue 4	no regional edition	Thu, 23 July
■ Issue 5	Thu, 27 August	Wed, 23 September
■ Issue 6	no regional edition	Mon, 30 November

Please send your submissions by the above deadline to [risler@csa-oceania.org](mailto:risler@csa-oceania.org). I look forward to hearing from you! Contact: +61 (0)412 935 565.

Stay safe! Ed

## A beacon of hope

Swiss light artist Gerry Hofstetter has been beaming images onto the face of the Matterhorn above the resort of Zermatt. The motifs vary: flags, hashtags, icons and short messages.

“Since the outbreak of the Corona crisis, we have been projecting symbols onto the Matterhorn every day. With the #hope campaign, we want to give people hope, call for solidarity and say thank-you to those who are currently doing almost superhuman efforts to maintain our infrastructure and healthcare.”

Each day Hofstetter consults with the mayor of Zermatt and the CEO of Zermatt Tourism to decide which image should be projected next. According to Hofstetter's team, the nightly displays have reached over 2.2 billion people via traditional, online and social media.

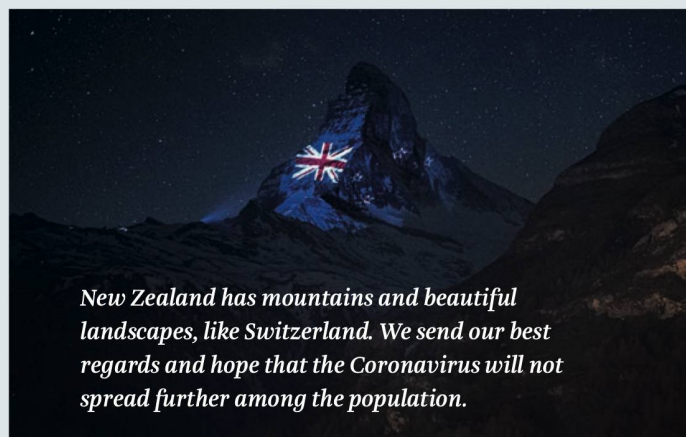
On 23 April it was Oceania's turn, and for a couple of hours the Southern Cross shone brightly over the Swiss Alps. It was live-streamed via the website [www.zermatt.ch/en/hope](http://www.zermatt.ch/en/hope) and for those that missed it, images taken by photographer Michael Portmann were posted the next day.

The CSA Oceania reposted those photographs and messages on their facebook page [www.facebook.com/Swissinoceania/](https://www.facebook.com/Swissinoceania/) and incredibly, it was shared 2,500 times and over 350,000 people were reached within 48 hours. This gesture of solidarity and words of hope clearly touched many people as hundreds of messages were posted expressing appreciation and gratitude. Ed

Photos: © Light Art by Gerry Hofstetter / Michael Portmann



*Australia is having a hard time with the bush fires and now the Coronavirus. Today we think of the Australian people and send hope and courage to get through the crisis well.*



*New Zealand has mountains and beautiful landscapes, like Switzerland. We send our best regards and hope that the Coronavirus will not spread further among the population.*



# The largest repatriation campaign in Swiss history

It is “the largest repatriation campaign in Swiss history” according to Hans-Peter Lenz, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) Crisis Management Centre. This is the result of the enormous efforts of Swiss diplomacy and dozens of FDFA collaborators all over the world beginning in Mid-March. 35 flights were organised to bring Swiss citizens stranded in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania back to Switzerland. As of 27 April 2020, about 7000 people were brought back by this huge operation.

## Australia

One of those special flights was out of Australia. It was the first time that an Edelweiss-airplane flew all the way to Sydney and then back to Zurich with a cargo of Swiss tourists on board who wanted to go back home.

Even before the Swiss Government decided on 28 March 2020 on the repatriation flight, Team Switzerland in Australia – the Embassy in Canberra and Consulate General in Sydney – was working in COVID-19 crisis mode. Following Swiss and Australian Government announcements, the Embassy and Consulate General teams had both started working on a roster alternating office presence and home-office.

The team experienced a massive increase of phone calls and e-mails from worried Swiss tourists, who heard from the Swiss Government that they should return home, who had their flights cancelled, who needed support. Team Switzerland, including our Honorary Consuls around Australia, had a huge job on their hands, informing our citizens via every available channel and regularly updating the constantly changing information. A special online form was created for Swiss tourists to register their interest in a flight home, and in no time some 570 people had provided their details.

More airlines cancelled their flights, more countries closed their borders and more airports prohibited passengers from transiting; the possibilities to fly back to Europe were getting fewer by the day. “At this point, we decided to send a plane to Australia to repatriate our blocked citizens”, remembers Pedro Zwahlen, Ambassador of Switzerland.

Team Switzerland had less than a week to send out information via the different online forms, the websites and facebook page. Hundreds of calls were answered. “We obtained clearance for the flight via diplomatic channels



and had to solve rather surprising questions like “are pets allowed on board”, “can I bring my surf board” “what about my bike?”, reminisce the colleagues.

The big day arrived on 4 April 2020. For the very first time, an airplane with the Edelweiss emblem on its tail was ready for boarding at the airport in Sydney!

Consul General Bernadette Hunkeler Brown and her team, supported by the country manager of SWISS International Airlines, were at the airport to give the final support to ‘our’ passengers. Some were tired, having had many days of uncertainty and worries or having travelled the day before or the same morning from other cities in Australia. In addition to our fellow Swiss citizens and through a great collaboration with other Embassies, citizens from Germany, Italy, France and other European countries were also able to return home with Edelweiss.

The Swiss Embassy and Consulate General appreciate the grateful feedback from many of the Swiss tourists after their return. “We extend our gratitude to all the colleagues involved in Australia and Switzerland, the Australian authorities, and, last but not least, to Edelweiss for the seamless collaboration!” says Consul General Hunkeler Brown.

Our files show that there are still nearly 500 visitors/tourists from Switzerland in Australia. Swiss authorities are recommending all Swiss tourists to fly home as soon as possible. Luckily, commercial flights are available again.

## Pacific Islands countries

As the Pacific Islands countries declared a State of Emergency and imposed heavy travel restrictions and shut-downs to contain the spread of the Coronavirus, cases of Swiss travellers blocked in the most remote travel destinations in the Pacific popped-up in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea from 25 March onwards.

As opposed to the group repatriation effort in Australia, the situation in the Pacific Islands required individualised case management for every single stranded tourist. “We had to analyse and contain the risks some of our fellow citizens found themselves in, identify alternative means of transport, communicate with national, provincial or local authorities,





negotiate with airlines to vacate space for transit passengers, co-ordinate with Embassies of other European countries the group evacuation of our citizens by chartered flights where no other means of transport would be available for the foreseeable future”, explains Swiss Ambassador and Special Envoy for the Pacific Islands Region, Yasmine Chatila Zwahlen.

Virtually all of our travellers stranded in the Pacific had to transit via Australia, as the transit option in Singapore no longer existed. In a number of cases, the Embassy had to appeal to Authorities to grant exemptions to the strict travel bans on compelling, compassionate and humanitarian grounds.

These were circumstances where Switzerland's solid network of good relations in the region and beyond benefited our Swiss compatriots directly and immediately, who appreciated what 'diplomatic channels' could be used for.

At the time of writing this article, the majority of Swiss tourists in the mentioned countries had returned or were in the process of returning home. The Embassy remains in contact with the Swiss community which calls the Pacific home – many are supporting their neighbours in the local communities who face the economic and social hardships of the COVID-19 crisis which is now compounded by the arrival of a major animal disease and an insect pest in PNG as well as the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu.

## New Zealand

In New Zealand the COVID-19 crisis developed quickly, and the NZ Government responded very swiftly to close the border and soon thereafter commercial flights out of the country disappeared.

The Embassy staff in Wellington moved to home-office and had to deal with many stranded tourists. Luckily Qatar Airways managed to keep the daily flight from Auckland to Doha running until 19 April with connections to Zurich. The FDEA in Bern managed to send a SWISS Boeing 777-300ER repatriation plane to Auckland (via Bangkok) to get some of the stranded tourists back to Zurich. On Wednesday, 8 April at 3.45am the Ambassador, the Attachée and the Consuls' family in Auckland met at the Auckland International Airport to process the 325 passengers. Only approved travellers were let into the terminal and with no e-tickets access had to be handled manually. Inside the terminal the check-in procedure was lengthy as everything had to be processed manually with hand-written boarding passes. 23 additional passengers that couldn't get accommodated on the SWISS flight managed to get on a Lufthansa repatriation flight to Frankfurt a few hours

later, thanks to the close collaboration between the Embassies.

A huge effort by the small Embassy team in Wellington with support from the Consulate in Auckland. Judging from the facebook group comments many people were very grateful for this special flight. It was the first time a SWISS airplane was seen in NZ skies.



Adrian Blaser, Honorary Consul in Auckland (left) and Ambassador Michael Winzap



## Swiss Sayings: Lost in Translation

*Starting with this issue, the Swiss Review Regional Pages will devote a column to interesting sayings in our national languages, explained by Beatrice Schlegel – a professional translator and Swiss Abroad from Wales in the UK.*

### “Ma cha nöds Füferli und's Weggli ha!”

This is a common saying in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The English equivalent would be “to have your cake and eat it too.” A ‘Weggli’ is a typical Swiss soft bun/roll, brioche-like with a ridge down the middle (easy for breaking into two). A ‘Füferli’ is the smallest denomination of Swiss currency coins i.e. five Rappen.

Traditionally, a ‘Weggli’ used to cost five Rappen in the olden days. So keeping that five Rappen coin and still getting the piece of bread, is not an option, as nothing in life is for free.

The French translation is:

“Vouloir le beurre et l'argent du beurre!”

In Italian it can be translated as:

“Non puoi avere la botte piena e la moglie ubriaca!”



**Beatrice Schlegel, B.A.(hons), M.A., MCIL**

info@beatricservices.co.uk www.beatricservices.co.uk



## Community News and Events

### NZ: Hamilton Swiss Club

Due to Covid-19 restrictions all our card evenings had to be cancelled for this year. The AGM planned for 1 May has been postponed and a new date will be set once we are able to have gatherings of 10 people. We hope all our members and friends have managed to stay safe and well in their bubbles and we look forward to possibly holding our 1st of August function – this will be communicated to our members via newsletter.

Our planned hiking weekend for early April has now been postponed to 30 October. This is a combined event with the Auckland Club members and will be held in lodge accommodation in Rotorua. Further details in the Helvetia magazine.

### NZ: Swiss Society of NZ

Our annual AGM planned for 31 May in Auckland has been postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions. A new date will be set once restrictions are eased. Documents will be sent to clubs to communicate with their members prior to a small meeting taking place, possibly at a different venue. We wish everyone a safe and happy winter. The Cowbell Competition will not take place this year – congratulations to Wellington for winning their semi-final. The Auckland vs Hamilton semi-final did not take place as this was scheduled during Covid-19 lock-down.

### NZ: Taranaki Swiss Club

The Taranaki Swiss Club held a very memorable picnic on 9 of February, and felt very privileged to have the Swiss Kiwi Yodel Group from Auckland make a special trip to entertain our large crowd. Their singing was superb, and the alphorn quartet was fabulous,



Wrestling Champion 2020, Erwin Hebler and  
Swiss Ambassador for New Zealand, Michael Winzap

together with our own talented accordion players. Our members were spoilt with entertainment, and of course everyone enjoyed watching the schwingen...with young and not-so-young members participating and enjoyed three bouts. We had a beautiful, sunny day (although not too hot which was great!) and many people enjoyed the delicious barbequed cervelats or bratwurst; a nice cold liquid refreshment; topped off with a Kiwi favourite, the trumpet. Many thanks to everyone who attended and especially a

HUGE thank-you to the Yodel Group for coming down...we hope you enjoyed your trip to Taranaki and what our province offers!!! The previous evening we held an informal dinner with our visitors from Auckland, and were also very fortunate to have our new Ambassador, Mr Michael Winzap and his wife Marina, attending. It was wonderful meeting you both and we hope that you enjoy New Zealand and what our beautiful country has to offer.

Unfortunately with the trying and interesting times under Covid-19 we have not been able to hold any functions in the last few months, but we hope that 'normality' will return soon and that we will be able to continue holding functions to promote and foster our Swiss culture and traditions. We hope that all members of our Swiss communities in Oceania are staying safe and healthy, and we look forward to socialising again soon.

### NSW: Cercle Romand

The social distancing rules that have been introduced in recent weeks have forced the club committee to cancel all scheduled events for March, April and May. We are hopeful that we can resume our scheduled activities from July onwards on the provision that the group gathering and social distancing rules will allow it.

Next event, on 5 July, will be a walk in the City. The itinerary will be chosen to discover some interesting part of Sydney. Details will be available in June and published on the club website.

The Annual General Assembly is scheduled for 23 August at the Drummoyne Sailing club.

We publish a monthly newsletter with our upcoming events and if you wish to receive it, please send us an email request on our club email: [cercleromand@gmail.com](mailto:cercleromand@gmail.com). Visit our website to discover all events for the remaining of the year.

The committee thanks all its members for supporting these events and looks forward to seeing you very soon. Stay safe and in good health.

Le Cercle Romand...que du bon temps

[www.cercleromand.com.au](http://www.cercleromand.com.au)

FB : Cercle Romand Sydney

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## NSW: Swiss Community Care Society (SCCS NSW)

Who could have imagined a few weeks ago that our lives would change so suddenly and so dramatically, and that we would constantly be asked to do this and to avoid that?

Due to COVID-19 we had to cancel the trip to the Central Coast on 12 May, and most likely the same will happen to our Swiss National Day Luncheon on 29 July. We will keep those of you who are on our contact list updated as we near the future dates of our planned events. If you are not on our list but interested in what's happening at SCCS you can always check on our website: [www.swissccs.org.au](http://www.swissccs.org.au)

This is an isolating time which is likely to be a new experience for all of us. It is very important that we connect to other people in as many ways as possible. So brighten someone's day! Pick-up the phone and make that call to a friend, your son, daughter, mum or dad! It is one way to suppress your own and other people's feelings of loneliness. You are also welcome to ring me, be it just for a chat or to tell me about a serious problem you are experiencing because of this situation. The Swiss Community Care Society is happy to help you in any way possible. My phone number is 02 9743 5323.

Rather than worry about the Coronavirus as you are sitting by yourself at home, you might like to go back to an old hobby. Why don't you create something nice with those remaining wool balls or with the fabric leftovers you collected for decades? You could dig out that puzzle which you finished years ago, then took apart and never gave away, or you could go back to that project which is still waiting to be finished in the garden or workshop. Being creative is one of the best ways to stay mentally healthy. To say it in short: **"Be positive, be proactive, not paranoid!"** (anon.)

*Regula Scheidegger*

## NSW: Swiss Yodlers of Sydney

The Swiss Yodlers of Sydney are ready



to spring into action and get on with it (FAITH NOT FEAR!) and look very much forward to join the Swiss Community Care Society Swiss National Day Luncheon at the Concordia Club Tempe on Saturday, 25 July.

We are also preparing for our traditional Swiss National Day Celebrations (Family Picnic) at Castle Hill Showground on 2 August! Please come along to these uplifting get-togethers! The past weeks and months have proven the need to be socially interactive and engage with friends and acquaintances, and what could be a better and easier way than to meet up at these carefree and uncomplicated gatherings!

At the time of going to press and you receiving this information, these dates may need to be confirmed and we invite you to check the available news feed from the Swiss Consulate General or call us on the numbers listed below if in doubt about these events.

"Aufgeschoben ist nicht aufgehoben"! The 'Eidg. Jodelfest' (postponed from June this year) will now go ahead in Basel in June 2021 and our Sydney Yodlers will be there!! This will give us the opportunity to refine our singing skills and practise even harder! Our Conductor wants nothing less! It may also encourage some new prospective Singers to join our Choir for this memorable, some of us say, unforgettable wonderful Festival in a unique Swiss City.

Why don't you come along to one of our Practise Sessions on Monday Nights at Chatswood to see for yourselves what we are all about (we don't just yodel!). For those of us following the true Swiss tradition, a drink (one, not more) and a

chat at the Bar often concludes our evening.

The Harbour Cruise 2021 (scheduled for end of February) will be confirmed.

We want to be as much part of your 'Swiss Experience in Australia' as we welcome you to be part of us, either as a member or as a 'Friend of the Swiss Yodlers of Sydney'.

## QLD: Yodel Choir & Folklore Group 'Baerg-Roeseli'

On 11 February we prepared a great video-message for Wuhan's Television and the Chinese people in confinement. We then started to record a program for Radio 4EB and the Music Masala Project which will see us on a CD compilation disseminated countrywide and on the Community Radio Network.

The Coronavirus stopped our rehearsals, but we have a few projects in mind and we'll surprise you soon including the recording of "Bim-Bam" with magic echo in our Toowong church.

To join, contact Gabriel on 0435 570 241, [yodel@swissclubqld.org.au](mailto:yodel@swissclubqld.org.au)

## QLD: Fraser Coast Swiss Group

The good news is that so far there were no reports of any sick people in our group.

The Easter Sunday Boat Tour down the Sandy straight 'fell into the water'. But a few very lucky ones had a little surprise from the Easter Bunny on their doorstep.

The Fraser Coast Swiss Group had its first gathering on Swiss National Day 2001 in the Botanical Gardens. Let's hope that the situation will improve so that we will be able to meet for our 20th Swiss National Day Celebration this year. So no plans as yet how and when the celebration will be.

Wishing you all a healthy winter and with some humour and a happy mind we will survive this crisis.

For any details contact Cecile on [cecile.scherrer@bigpond.com](mailto:cecile.scherrer@bigpond.com) or 0409 286 326 or visit [www.swissclubqld.org.au/fraser-coast](http://www.swissclubqld.org.au/fraser-coast)



## SA: Swiss Club of South Australia

How the world has changed in such a short time! The uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and its impact has required us, like most other clubs and communities, to review our schedule of activities – we were looking forward to a number of events this year, and needless to say, some of these will have to be postponed to a better time.

We were lucky enough to kick-off the year with a beach day on 23 February, at West Beach, on a bright sunny day, and although it was a small gathering, we had plenty of fun: sometimes these smaller events allow you to get to know people better, and of course, to greet newcomers in a less traditional environment.

Our next event was going to be the Fondue night on 9 May – with the current restrictions on gatherings, we have replaced it with a Stay at Home Fondue Night, where Fromart ([www.fromart.com.au](http://www.fromart.com.au)) and The Smelly Cheese (Adelaide Central

Market) supported us by providing a discount on cheese – thank you for your generosity!

Our other events will of course need to be confirmed as we get closer to the dates: 1st of August, our Würstli Brötli picnic, the Samichlaus event and our AGM – no doubt the world will return to its former self in time, hopefully for the better, and we look forward to catching up then!

Did you know about the Swiss Radio Station in South Australia? Tune in to 5EBI (103.1FM) on a Saturday, from 6pm to 7pm ACST – <http://5ebi.com.au/on-air-programs/1030/swiss>

For further details of all events, how to become a member or getting in touch with our business partners, head to our website [www.swissclubsau.com.au](http://www.swissclubsau.com.au)

## VIC: Trachtengruppe Schwyzergruess A.S.C.C. Swiss Folk Dance Group Alpenrose

2020 so far has been a different and challenging year in many ways. I do hope that the wonderful Swiss community is keeping safe and well.

Unfortunately the dance group had to postpone the Unterhaltungsabend and some of the card nights at the Swiss Club.

Trachtengruppe Schwyzergruess will cancel the annual Kaffeeklatsch and also the Mystery Trip in November.

 <p>Lending a hand since 1879</p>	<p><b>The Swiss Society of Victoria's purpose is to assist fellow Swiss in Victoria, old and young, who need financial or personal support. If you are experiencing difficulties, or you know of someone who does, please contact us. We are here to help.</b></p> <p><a href="https://swissocietyvic.org/">https://swissocietyvic.org/</a>          Patrick Albert – M: 0449 999 645          E: <a href="mailto:admin@swissocietyvic.org">admin@swissocietyvic.org</a></p> <p><small>Registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ABN 41 419 264 390)</small></p>
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Staying healthy is the most important thing, so we feel that it is in everyone's interest to play it safe.

On behalf of the dance group and the Trachtengruppe, I send you all best wishes and most of all good health. We are thinking of you all.

*Sylvia Hochuli OAM*

## VIC: The Matterhorn Yodel Choir

Along with all other social gatherings, practice sessions and performances are on hold while we do our bit to curb the spread of the Coronavirus.

After being supplied with plenty of homework, choir members are keeping their voices supple while entertaining their pets and partners to various degrees of enjoyment!

New members are still welcome. Please contact our conductor Chris on 0428 427 434.

We hope that everyone stays safe and well, and we look forward to meeting again when we will feel like kicking up our heels and celebrating. Check out our facebook page for updates on up and coming events.

### Potential Upcoming Events:

**2/8: Swiss National Day Celebration** – to be held at the Austrian Club in Heidelberg.

**8/8: Jass Night** – at the Horticultural Centre, 82 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill. Start 8pm.

## Meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) on 14 March 2020 in Berne had to be cancelled. As a consequence – and as a first in the history of the organisation – the 127 delegates were asked to cast their votes electronically on matters that couldn't be postponed until the next meeting.

The Annual and Financial reports, the budget and the priorities for 2020 were accepted with a huge majority. Worth mentioning is:

- The partnership with the Cantonal Bank of Geneva and Swiss Tourism has been extended;
- The three existing websites [aso.ch](http://aso.ch), [revue.ch](http://revue.ch) and [SwissCommunity.org](http://SwissCommunity.org) will be merged into one this year and fundamentally modernised so that they better meet the needs of the Swiss Abroad;
- Due to the e-voting setback, efforts will focus on enabling voters to receive voting material electronically until a secure e-voting system is available;
- The legal service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) which provides free advice regarding emigration and also return to Switzerland processed 1,800 inquiries in 2019.
- The OSA takes on the secretarial function for independent foundations and funds for the benefit of the Swiss Abroad. Examples are:
  - E.O. Kilcher Fund (start-up aid for return migrants in need as well as additional scholarships for Swiss students abroad in Switzerland);
  - Fonds Freiburghaus (additional scholarships for Swiss students abroad in Switzerland);
  - Heinrich Huber Fund (help for needy Swiss, especially overseas).

Approved but more controversial were the directives for the direct election of the CSA delegates. They provide the legal basis for broadening the electorate and give all Swiss Abroad registered with a Consulate the right to elect their representative as opposed to elections by the Swiss Clubs. Whilst Australia and Mexico went through a successful pilot project in 2017, the voting system used then is not available anymore. Hence some questions regarding the implementation, which requires assistance of the local representations, remain and will need to be solved.

All in all, the delegates experienced a shortened and partly digitalised version of the yearly spring meeting. Whilst participation happened at low cost and in environmentally sound manner, the drawback was the lack of networking and lively discussions that lead to instant feedback, reflection and better understanding ahead of decision taking. Some of these downsides could have been made up by video conferencing. Given the next meeting is scheduled for August and international travel unlikely by then, this tool may be embraced at the next meeting despite the large number of participants. COVID-19 has also put the OSA on a steep learning curve!

For any questions, feedback or suggestions please contact us via [info@csa-oceania.org](mailto:info@csa-oceania.org) or check our website on [www.csa-oceania.org](http://www.csa-oceania.org)

CARMEN TROCHSLER | CSA OCEANIA, ADELAIDE



The **CSA Oceania** is your elected team of delegates to the Council of the Swiss Abroad. We represent the 33,000+ registered Swiss living in Oceania and defend your interests as a Swiss citizens living in this region.

Visit our website **[www.csa-oceania.org](http://www.csa-oceania.org)**

- for links to all **Swiss Community Groups**, Swiss Organisations and Swiss Consular Representations in Oceania;
- for information about the **Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)** and the **CSA Oceania** and the services they offer;
- for **important information** about issues concerning Swiss Abroad.

For any assistance or advice, contact the **CSA Oceania** on [info@csa-oceania.org](mailto:info@csa-oceania.org)





## The Swiss Old Age Pension

The Australian CSA delegates are often approached with practical questions related to the Swiss Old Age pension. This article summarises the three main topics.

CARMEN TROCHSLER | CSA OCEANIA, ADELAIDE  
BEAT KNOBLAUCH | CSA OCEANIA, SYDNEY

### Reaching retirement age – What to do?

The Swiss old age pension isn't paid automatically when you reach statutory retirement age. The Central Compensation Office (CCO) in Switzerland recommends submitting your pension claim no later than three months prior to reaching the statutory retirement age, as this will give the compensation office sufficient time to gather the information needed to calculate your pension. The applicable form can be downloaded from the website of the CCO: <https://bit.ly/3cXLOS0>

### Annual Life Certificate – Why?

Every year the Swiss Compensation Office (CCO) sends a life and civil status certificate to all Old Age Pension recipients. This is to check that beneficiaries are still alive. The form must be completed, signed and witnessed by a competent authority (e.g. Honorary Consul) before returning it to the CCO

within 90 days. Failure to meet the deadline may lead to an interruption in benefit payments. New pension recipients first receive the form 12 months after their benefit entitlement begins.

The blank life certificate can also be downloaded online: <https://bit.ly/3f5RTNZ>, completed and then returned via email to [oaie@zas.admin.ch](mailto:oaie@zas.admin.ch)

### Tax deduction from ATO – How to claim?

Once you are receiving an income from the Swiss Social Insurance (AHV/AVS or IV/AI) you may be entitled to claim a deduction, to reduce the amount of tax you pay in Australia.

The deduction applies to your personal contributions towards your Swiss Social Insurance in Switzerland (including voluntary contributions made while residing outside of Switzerland). In order to allow the ATO to determine your eligibility, you will need to request a statement from the Swiss Compensation Office, which certifies the total amount of your personal contribution paid into the

Swiss Social Insurance. Follow the steps below to lodge your claim:

#### Step 1:

Request a statement from the CCO in Geneva relating to your personal contributions into the Swiss Social Insurance. Click on <https://bit.ly/2yQshEl> for the Swiss request form.

The Swiss Compensation Office will check the request and send you a statement via mail that contains your personal contribution figure.

#### Step 2:

Submit the statement from Switzerland to the ATO along with a request to determine the deductible amount. Click on <https://bit.ly/2VLTveK> for the Australian request form.

The ATO will advise you on the amount you may claim as deduction in a private ruling.

#### Further links:

Central Compensation Office,  
Geneva, Switzerland  
<https://bit.ly/35qCiEm>

Consulate General of Switzerland,  
Sydney, Australia  
<https://bit.ly/35qCiEm>

Please note that this article provides general information and should not be regarded as legal or tax advice. Separate advice relating to your individual circumstances should be obtained from a professional.