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## Swiss Embassy news

### Swiss Honorary Consuls: What they do... and what they cannot do

Can honorary consuls issue passports or visas? Can they marry a couple? Can they authenticate a document? Swiss honorary consuls are often confronted with such requests, as revealed during a Regional Consular Conference held in Sydney on March 15 and 16, 2013. Switzerland became a member of the Schengen Agreement in 2008. The Schengen Agreement changed the role of honorary consuls considerably. Under the agreement, for example, honorary consuls are no longer authorized to grant visas.

Honorary consuls are the local representative of the ambassador or consul general. They act as the eyes and ears of the ambassador or consul general. This includes representing the ambassador or consul general at national holiday celebrations or other official events. The honorary consuls maintain and expand a network of local contacts in local government, as well as in business, scientific and cultural circles. They report to the Embassy or Consulate General whenever an opportunity for Swiss interests arises and provide general information on Switzerland. The honorary consuls further promote a spirit of solidarity within the Swiss expatriate community and strengthen its ties with Switzerland. They keep an eye out for destitute or helpless Swiss and let them know that help can generally be made available.

The honorary consuls, after consultation with the Embassy or the Consulate General, assist the Swiss in need, both those living abroad as well as tourists, be it because of an accident, sickness, theft or imprisonment, etc. They inform the Embassy or Consulate General of any circumstances that potentially affect the Swiss. They also report on any event of importance with regard to travel advice published by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The only administrative duty of an honorary consul remains the confirmation of the proof of life for the AHV/IV. For all other consular and administrative services, Swiss citizens need to contact the Embassy or Consulate General. We thank our honorary consuls for their outstanding work.

*Marion Weichelt Krupski, Swiss Ambassador in Wellington & Marcel Stutz, Swiss Ambassador in Canberra*

Homepage of the Embassy in New Zealand:

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs/ocea/vnz/afoneu.html>

Homepage of the Embassy in Australia: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs/ocea/aus/afoaus.html>



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### A Heart for Switzerland



A heart for Switzerland is the theme for this year's Pro Patria badges, featuring a bright red heart with a white cross on top of its left side, created by artist Yvan "Lozzi" Pestalozzi from Zürich.

The Embassy is expecting to receive the badges at the end of May and will then distribute them to the Swiss club secretaries. The cost is NZ\$8.00 per badge and you can place your order with your Swiss club or directly from the Embassy ([wivian.buckrell@eda.admin.ch](mailto:wivian.buckrell@eda.admin.ch)).

The proceeds will in the first instance go to the Swiss village and regional museums around the country.

Thank you for your support.

*Marion Weichelt Krupski*

*Ambassador*

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