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SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE 2013 ELECTION

To the Joint Standing Committee of Electoral Matters,

I write to you to express my disappointment with the ambiguous nature of the Australian Electoral Commission's (AEC) postal voting requirements. I am a student of the University of Western Australia, currently studying at Montana State University on an exchange agreement. On November 28th, 2013, Paul Davidson, the Returning Officer for Perth, notified me by mail that my postal vote had not been accepted on the grounds that it had not been witnessed.

Living in Bozeman, Montana, with a population of 30,000 people, I could not find a fellow Australian to "witness" my vote. Instead, I collectively submitted my ballot papers along with my reasons for not having a witness, as well as signed copy of my passport identification page. My disappointment stems from the postal voting requirement of submitting ballot papers in a separate envelope to that of a statement articulating why I could not find a witness, as well as additional documents. To my knowledge, this detail is not included on the AEC's website, nor on the postal vote instruction manual. Moreover, the AEC only mailed one envelope to send both ballot papers and additional statements, increasing the cost for Australian's living overseas to have their voices heard.

Given the close nature of the Western Australian Senate election, the disqualification of my vote was disheartening. I am hoping that you the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters will review the current requirements for postal voters, and provide advice to the AEC to ensure that the postal voting requirements are clearly articulated. I appreciate your help in this matter.

Warm Regards,

Tom Lillywhite.

