

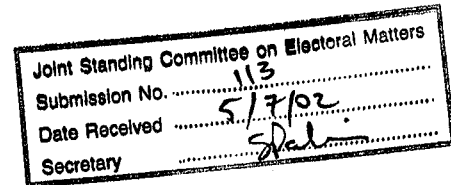
Read, Shane (REPS)

From: Kim Robert AUSTIN [kraustin@mail.wvu.edu]
Sent: Friday, 5 July 2002 1:35 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
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Subject: Submission

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Message:

To: The Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee
on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir,

This submission is in response to the JSCEM's invitation for public comment as part of its Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2001 Federal Election.

I am an Australian citizen, currently living in the USA, married to a US citizen. I left Australia in July of 1998. For the foreseeable future, my wife and I will remain in the USA, due to family concerns. Eventually however, it is our intention to move back to Australia permanently.

When I was preparing to leave Australia, I went to see the local Electoral Office (Toowoomba, QLD) to find out what I should do about my electoral standing. The person I spoke to told me that I should have my name taken from the roll, seeing that I was going to be indefinitely out of the country. At the time I assumed that this would be easily reversed, only to find out to my dismay that this was not the case.

I am and always will be a loyal Australian citizen. I therefore want to be able to vote in elections which after all will have some bearing on my life once I return to the country permanently.

In the USA I am unable to vote because I am a permanent resident with a green card. I accept that I am unable to vote here, but I find it difficult to swallow that I am unable to vote in elections in my own home country, especially given that I have not changed my citizenship.

I keep very up-to-date with the happenings in Australia, via the Internet, phone calls, and emails. I have family and friends in Australia as well. Being 10000 miles from home does not mean that I am ignorant of what is going on there, and I really would like your Committee to rule in favour of allowing the dis-enfranchised ex-pats the opportunity to have a vote in future elections.

In a country where voting is not compulsory, people I have talked to about this wonder what the big deal is. For me it is about maintaining my connection to the land of my birth, and knowing that I am able to exercise my right to vote.

I look forward to reading of your Committee's decision.

Thanks

Kim R Austin