

From: Stephanie Helm
Sent: Saturday, 22 June 2002 4:16 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
Cc:
Subject: Submission

From: **Stephanie Helm**
E-mail: _____
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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 left Australia in 1985 when I was 17 years old, on a 5-year scholarship to study in Japan. I lived in Japan for a total of 9 years, and since then have been living in the US for the past 8 years. I came from NW Tasmania in the Braddon electorate.

Since I was not yet 18 when I left Australia, I was not on the Electoral Roll and never have been. I knew that I was not obligated to register as an overseas voter, but I had no idea that if I wished to vote I had to register within 2 years of departure.

For about the past 10 years I have owned properties and other investments in Tasmania and pay taxes in Australia. I visit Australia at least once a year to spend time with family and check on investments.

These days it is so easy to follow Australian news via the Internet. I receive daily updates via the web, and I also subscribe to two Australian magazines.

I plan to return to Australia within the next 5 years, so naturally I am concerned about changes affecting the lifestyle of Australian residents. The fact that I was not able to participate in the last elections, and cannot do so in future ones until I am able to reside in Australia and re-apply for registration, is very frustrating. I do not think there needs to be any time restriction on overseas voter registration. It seems surprising that Australia, as a developed and 'wired' country which requires all residents to vote, should place such restrictions on overseas residents. ALL Australian citizens should have the right to vote.

Respectfully,
Stephanie Helm