

Read, Shane (REPS)

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Sent: Thursday, 4 July 2002 1:30 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
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Subject: Submission

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Message:

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	92
Date Received	4/7/02
Secretary	<i>Shane</i>

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.

Based on my experiences as an Australian citizen travelling overseas at the time of an election, it is my view that the facilities for voting in overseas missions must be substantially upgraded. During the 2001 election, I was travelling in Latin America. Before leaving Australia, I contacted the AEC to ask them where I could vote in the election. I was told that I could vote at any Australian mission. This was untrue. My wife and I attempted to vote in Guadelajaja, Mexico, only to be told that the only polling booth for all Central America was in Mexico City. Due to the inaccurate information given to me by the AEC in Sydney, we had to break our journey and return to Mexico City. I believe that it is highly iniquitous that voting rights for Australians are severely curtailed while travelling. I was also travelling in the USA during the 1996 election. I was discouraged from voting by the mission representatives in San Fransisco. The mission did not wish to deal with my enqui!

ry, and told me, in effect, that as it was not compulsory I should not bother. I believe that the conduct of the AEC and overseas missions should be reviewed for future elections.

On to the related issue of overseas electors. There will doubtless be submissions that Australians permanently resident overseas should be granted increased voting rights, on the basis that the difficulty of the process is "disenfranchising". I do not agree. Citizens not permanently resident in Australia do not pay tax, will not be affected by the result of the election and effectively have no "stake" in the outcome of the election. To reverse the American statement of rights, there can be no representation without taxation - that is, where the citizen has no investment in the government, they have no rights to determine the colour of that government.

I would urge the committee to reject any change to the qualification of overseas voters.

I make this submission as an Australian permanently resident in the UK.