

Voting rights Inquiry a UK perspective

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In response to the inquiry being held into the Australian Electoral System I would like to make the following comments

1. Having arrived in the UK in November 2003 as a Commonwealth Citizen I was immediately eligible to enrol on the UK Electoral roll and voted in the 1997 UK election even though I was not a British citizen.
2. However after making 2 postal votes from Australia House to vote in the Australian Elections my home address in Australia received notification that I had to make a declaration in respect to not living in Australia and would be taken off the Australian electoral role. I signed the declaration and have ever since 1999 have not been able to vote in an Australian election.
3. As I still retain Australian citizenship it would be my view that Australian Citizens living abroad should have the right to vote in an Australian election.
4. Issues that would confront Australian Citizens living abroad particularly the UK would be the current reciprocal Hospital and Medical agreement between Australia and the UK, visa and entry requirements, Citizenship rights for children born outside Australia to a Australian parent and pension arrangements to name a few. Certainly Australian citizens abroad should be able to vote in an Australian election where an elected Parties policy would be to change the Australian constitution, which would inevitably have implications in respect to current agreements as mentioned.
5. Certainly as an Australian citizen living in the UK with children born in the UK should any of the current rights and entitlements be revoked due to changes in Government Policy there should be an entitlement for those living abroad to vote in an Australian Election.
6. The democratic right of citizens of Australia would be compromised if those living abroad were not able to vote in an Australian election, particularly if policy issues were to directly affect those citizens.

In Summary Australian Citizens living abroad should be able to vote in an Australian election. The democratic right to vote should not be withdrawn simply on the basis of an Australian Citizen not currently residing in Australia. Australian Political Policy could have consequence to those living abroad and therefore those living abroad should have the right to influence policy by the democratic right to vote as an Australian Citizen.

Toby Chambers