

## Submission 24

From: Peter Morris CPA MIIA (Aust) Sent: Thursday, 1 May 2008 3:51 AM  
To: Committee, EM (REPS)  
Subject: Submission

To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir,

Please accept this submission for the JSCEM's Inquiry into the 2007 Federal Election.

1. Before the 2007 election I found that I had been removed from the Kingston Electoral Roll even though I had been registered as an overseas voter previously. When we did obtain the enrolment, I found that my wife was registered as an overseas voter at our old address and she was registered on the Federal, State and Local Government electoral rolls. I downloaded a form and scanned it and sent it to the AEC and eventually I was placed on the Federal Electoral Roll only.
2. As an Australian living overseas I find it a quite onerous task to have to continually send paperwork via fax or scanned documents to the AEC to maintain my place on the electoral roll. I felt that my removal from the roll could have been because the Kingston Electorate is a fairly marginal seat and for some reason, some overseas electors had been removed from the roll.
3. I maintain fairly close ties with Australia and have returned on 5 occasions for extended stays over the past 11 years. I intend to return to Australia upon retirement in several years time.
4. I submit that the AEC should accept a declaration that a person retains his or her Australian nationality and retains close ties with Australia even though living overseas, and allow that declaration to stand without the need to renew that declaration every 3 or 6 years or so. Perhaps if a person no longer votes in Australian elections they could be removed unless they advise otherwise.
5. I submit that when a person is validly accepted to be registered on the Electoral Roll, they should be allowed to be automatically registered on the Federal, State and Local Government electoral rolls as part of a single process.
6. I note the British system allows its voters to remain on the electoral roll for 14 or 15 years after they leave Britain and something of that order might make life easier for Australians who value their vote and want to vote in Australian elections.
7. I submit that the Electoral Law be changed to allow for a significantly longer period of enrolment on the overseas register, perhaps something like 20 years. A person could be removed from the electoral roll if he or she does not vote and does not advise why they haven't voted. If a person continues to vote then they should be allowed to remain on the electoral roll indefinitely.

8. I note that Italy has an electoral system whereby Italian overseas voters are entitled to vote for a representative for their particular part of the world, for example, I believe there is an electorate for Australasia and the Pacific region and all Italians living in that area can elect their own representative from that geographical area and have that person represent them in the Italian Parliament. Australia should consider a system akin to that for Australians living outside of Australia.

9. I submit that Australia should consider a system similar to that of Italy and allow overseas electors to vote for their own representative(s) in the Australian Parliament.

10. I note that the new evidentiary procedures for overseas voter registration restrict the witness to the signing of the form to certain occupational groups. I note that "Airline Ground Staff" may witness the form. I note that qualified accountants may not witness the form unless they are a "Registered Tax Agent". As a Certified Practising Accountant with CPA Australia, which requires at least a 3 year business degree at a recognised university followed by a rigorous professional training program that often takes a further 3 years, I cannot see how a member of an airline ground staff should be allowed to witness a form when a qualified accountant, but not a registered tax agent, cannot be a witness.

11. I submit that the categories of witnesses to the overseas elector registration form be extended to members of the professions which have a registration process within Australia and including CPAs and Chartered Accountants who may not necessarily be registered tax agents. Other professional groups should also be considered where relevant.

12. As a matter of interest, I believe it would be surprising to find any qualified accountants living overseas and who may be in a position to witness an electoral registration form, who are registered tax agents because there is no requirement (or police-able policy) that an accountant preparing tax returns from outside of Australia must be a registered tax agent in Australia. Indeed, there is probably little call for a qualified accountant living overseas to be a registered tax agent.

13. As a final submission, in general terms, I believe that Australia should be making it easier and not more difficult for Australians to continue to vote in Australian elections whilst working and living overseas.