

From: Anthony and Janet Linden
Sent: Wednesday, 19 June 2002 5:03 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
Cc:
Subject: Submission

From: Anthony and Janet Linden
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.

We had a difficulties trying to vote when we were in Canada in 86-89.

The nearest Consulate is in Ottawa, we were 2000 km away in Halifax. An election was called at rather short notice. I immediately applied for a postal vote giving the info I thought would be necessary.

Firstly, I got a form to fill in asking for exactly the SAME info.

Finally, I received the voting papers two days AFTER the election with a note saying that as time was running out it would be better if I could come to Ottawa to vote in person - a bit like asking a Melbournian to go to Rockhampton!

The main problem in all this was the appallingly slow Canadian postal system. It took one week in each direction for each of these communications to be delivered - 5 weeks in all had the process been completed.

At that time letters from Australia arrived faster than those from elsewhere in Canada.

The problem here was more the postal system, rather than the Australian electoral system, except for the consulate ruining my chances by asking for information I had already given and thereby introducing one additional cycle of letters into the system.

In those days fax was quite new and e-mail almost non-existent; options for faster communication may have improved since then.

It would be nice to vote, but there is one serious issue of concern to us.

That is taxation. When I wanted to be treated by the Australian Tax Office as a non-resident for tax purposes, I had to actually apply to have my name take off the roll.

Otherwise, one is still considered to be a resident and this has serious taxation implications if one has investments or property in Oz and one is declaring everything in Switzerland in an honest way.

The Southern Cross Group has recently sought information from the ATO which suggests that this may not be mandatory, but until the situation is clear, it makes many people wary of enrolling to vote.

At the moment, if there are tax issues, both routes are not feasible.

Re-establishing enfranchisement may not simply be a matter for the Electoral Office, but will involve the Taxation Office as well.

How do we get all the information we need to know exactly where we stand and what our rights are?

Please consider these issues in your review.

Sincerely

J&A Linden