

Read, Shane (REPS)

From: Mr. Wayne P. Brabazon [bwayne@region.waterloo.on.ca]
Sent: Thursday, 20 June 2002 12:44 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
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Subject: Submission

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June 19, 2002

To: The Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee
on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

To Whom It May Concern:

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.

My family and I left Australia in March 1989. My two children, Darren James Brabazon and Jaclyn Amy Brabazon, are both Australian citizens and Canadian citizens. I find myself now living permanently in Canada due to life issues such as marriage, divorce, education, children and employment. I have recently sought Canadian citizenship since the repeal of Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948, which was enacted on April 4th of this year.

I would like to point out to the committee some of the issues I have had to deal with given my Australian citizenship and current Canadian residency. My status in Canada from my arrival in April 1989 to the date at which I become a Canadian citizen (anticipated to be in early 2003) is one of Landed Immigrant status. From a voting rights point of view, the current situation with myself is that I cannot vote in Canada as I am a Landed Immigrant and I cannot vote in Australia as I am not a resident there.

I do understand the reasons why I as a working, contributing, tax paying individual in both countries (past and present) has absolutely no voting rights anywhere. That situation is my reality but the situation hardly seems fair. Another issue I have dealt with was when I moved my superannuation funds to Canada given that I will most likely retire here. I was taxed punitively as a non-resident by the ATO. Today, things have changed considerably with the Internet and lobby groups such as the Southern Cross Group, a group of well educated, and influential, expatriate Australians.

Currently, my only visits to Australia were for emergency reasons such as family illness and funerals. My parents still live in Perth, Western Australia. Since leaving Australia in 1989 I have visited Australia in 1990 and 1996. Economics and employment restrict how often I can visit my homeland.

Please note that in the future there will be issues that will directly affect me as an expatriate Australian and I feel I should have the right to vote in Australian elections. Some of these anticipated issues include Bilateral Pension Arrangements between Australia & Canada and dual nationality issues with respect to my two children and for that matter myself included as a prospective dual national. The Internet, family & friends in Australia, Australian Government web sites, Australian newspaper web sites and the Southern Cross Group will allow me to effectively keep in touch with Australian issues. Please note the effectiveness of the Internet and the Southern Cross Group which has been demonstrated with the repeal of Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act 1948.

I am not currently enrolled on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll as confirmed by the Australian Electoral Commission. I was on the electoral role when I left Australia in the sub-division of Darling Range. My parents electoral sub-division is Carine; I still use my parents address as an Australian point of contact for myself. The last time I voted in Australia was in the 1987 federal election and I most likely voted in the 1988 referendum as well. I did not vote in the 1999

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republic issues referendum but I was very aware of the issues given press coverage both here in Canada and Australia.

I currently live in the city of Kitchener-Waterloo which is a one hour drive to the south-west of Toronto. If I was to cast my vote in an Australian election I would have to travel to Toronto to vote. Currently I have to travel to Toronto to obtain new Australian passports.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that I disagree with the time limitations that currently apply to the electoral role. I believe that these limitations should be removed as they are inappropriate in this day and age given the information available on the Internet plus online lobby groups such as the Southern Cross Group. Please note that the Southern Cross Group is active in Canberra through personal representation by some of its key members. It is possible for expatriate Australians to easily access election forms and election information through government web sites and lobby group notifications. Friends and family that live in Australia are also a source of information on current Australian issues. However, of most importance to the Australian expatriate are issues such as bilateral pension arrangements, passport issues, taxation issues and dual nationality issues. The issue of Australia becoming a republic is also a topic that expatriate Australians would have strong opinions on given we were all raised in Australia. I, therefore, believe that all Australian citizens should be entitled to enroll to vote at any time, regardless of where they live and when they left Australia. Thank you for considering this submission.

Signed: Wayne P. Brabazon