

Sent: Wednesday, 30 April 2008 9:58 PM

To: Committee, EM (REPS)

Subject: Submission

To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

I am one of many many Australians who have been disenfranchised by the current electoral laws because I live outside Australia. I left Sydney, where I had been on the electoral role (in Ku-ring-gai) for a number of years, to gain work experience in my field in London. I arrived in London in late 1983. During the first few years I endeavoured to vote in all Australian elections but found one day that I had, without any consultation or notification, simply been removed from the electoral role.

During my time in London I have visited and continue to visit Australia regularly. All of my family lives in Australia and I intend to retire in Australia. Whilst I have now lived in the United Kingdom for many years, I have not taken British citizenship and regard myself as Australian, albeit a disenfranchised and politically ignored Australian. I have been and am a member of various Australian business and professional organisations in London and from time to time attend events for Australians, such as those held in Australia House. I also follow the news in Australia, primarily these days via the internet where news about Australia and Australian affairs is readily available.

I was particularly disappointed and aggrieved not to be able to participate in the referendum on becoming a republic in 1999. To be excluded from such an important decision, which potentially could have affected my right to live and work in the UK, was grossly unfair. It is also unfair that I should be excluded from Federal (including the 2007 Federal Election) and State elections as again changes in the both of these areas can (and do) affect me personally. I accept however that it is difficult for me to have any meaningful contribution in local government elections as it is very difficult to keep up with local affairs when living abroad.

In my view Australians living abroad should be entitled, but not compelled, to vote in all Federal and State elections and in all referenda, regardless of the period of time they have lived abroad. I am not aware of any other country that deliberately disenfranchises a significant proportion of its citizens just because they happen to live abroad. Significant numbers of Australians live and work abroad for periods of time. Most living abroad intend to return one day and to deny them a right which should exist in any democratic country, particularly on changes, whether to the government of the day or on constitutional reform, reflects very poorly on Australia and Australians.

In conclusion, I would like to see the following changes to the Australian electoral laws as regards Australians living abroad:

1. The abolition of the time limit for voting by Australian living abroad;
2. After a period of time, such as three years residence abroad, make voting by overseas Australians not compulsory and permit Australians to stay on the Federal and State electoral

registers for set periods of time, such as five years, after which they would need to re-register for another period of five years; and

3. Facilitate voting by overseas Australians by permitting early postal voting as well as voting at the relevant High Commission, Embassy or Consulate.