

sub119lawton.txt

From: Robert Lawton [rglawton@hotmail.com]  
Sent: Thursday, 15 May 2008 6:13 AM  
To: Committee, EM (REPS)  
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Subject: Submission

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To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir,

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

I am enrolled to vote in the seat of Boothby, SA.

I have lived mainly abroad since 2002. I was an overseas elector during 2002-2004, and have been

again from 2006 until now. I voted in the 2004 and 2007 elections from abroad; in 2004, through the

High Commission in London by post, and in 2007 in person at the Embassy in Brasilia, Brazil.

On both occasions the actual voting process itself was straightforward.

What is not straightforward is the legislation relating to the roll.

In my view the simplest way to deal with voting abroad is to make it compulsory. If an enrolled

voter goes abroad, that person should remain obliged to vote in his or her last-notified division.

Failure to do so should bring make further passport applications impossible.

If that is considered too severe, then I'd suggest that the six-years-with-one-year-extensions rule

which currently applies to overseas registration should be scrapped. A once and for all

registration should be enough. People who spend many years abroad, or largely abroad, should not be

assumed to have lost their links to Australia.

In my case, I went to the UK to study, started a relationship, had a child and then returned to

Australia for 18 mths before spending time in Brazil with my new family. We will be emigrating

(those of us who are not already Australian citizens) in 2010, possibly meaning that I will be

voting from abroad again in that year.

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I expect to be spending time in Brazil in the future, so I can certainly see the possibility of

votes cast from abroad into the future too.

I might add that when I left Australia in 2002 I expected to be abroad for more than 6 years. but

my plans changed.

I think the ease by which people lose their place on the roll reflects the lack of real sanction in

Australia for failing to vote. In Brazil one must vote each time there is a referendum or election,

wherever in the world one is. If not, such things as passports or tax refunds are not made available

to the citizen. In essence, federal government contact becomes impossible. It is possible to seek

exemption, and such is granted, but the onus is on the voter to apply for exemption (whether

prospectively or retrospectively).

Yours sincerely

Robert Lawton