

Please accept this submission for the JSCEM's Inquiry into the 2010 Federal Election.

I am an Australian citizen living in the United Kingdom.

I have been living outside Australia since 2008. I visit Australia regularly. Although I am abroad, I remain connected to local, state and national politics in Australia. I am actively involved in an Australian political party and this party has a strong level of support and activity from its London branch. I am active in political circles in the United Kingdom as well (where I have a right to vote in certain elections even though I am not a British Citizen). My family continues to reside in Australia. I intend to return to Australia with my British husband in the future to raise a family. My husband has previously spent time in Australia (although he is not an Australian citizen) to complete a master degree and for a working holiday. We were married in Sydney on 10 April 2010. Our connection to Australia is deep and loyal. Australia is and always will be home. My motivations and interests in protecting and defending Australia remain unchanged despite my residence abroad. I am currently on the Commonwealth electoral roll.

My experiences with the Australian federal electoral system while offshore are as follows:

I commend the AEC for facilitating an effective and efficient postal voting mechanism. I use the postal voting mechanism to vote as it is not always certain due to work commitments that I will be able to attend a London polling station.

Even though I am abroad, I take my right to vote seriously and consider every single preference.

I am greatly concerned about the prospect of being removed from the roll if I remain overseas for an extended period of time. I see no reason why living overseas should be grounds for disenfranchising a citizen of Australia from voting in elections. The average time that people - young professionals like me in particular - are choosing to stay abroad is increasing and the benefits they bring to Australia on return due to their international experiences should be embraced, not penalised through disenfranchisement.

I urge you to reconsider this aspect of the rules.

Yours faithfully and loyally  
Felicity Anne Deane (nee McMahan)