

Read, Shane (REPS)

From: Stephen Blackney [stephen.blackney@btinternet.com]
Sent: Friday, 5 July 2002 10:04 AM
To: JSCoEA, committee sec
Subject: Dissatisfied Disenfranchisee

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| Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters | |
| Submission NO. | 118 |
| Date Received | 5/7/02 |
| Secretary | Shane |

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The Committee Secretary,
JSCoEA, Parliament House, Canberra

Dear Sir,

I am a fourth generation Australian who happens to be living outside the country for the present who has just found out that I have been disenfranchised without making a conscious decision on my part. I am aggrieved.

I have no desire to relinquish my citizenship, on the contrary. It has often been difficult to carry out my employed work because I needed visas from European, central and east European countries over the years I visited them on business, when my UK and EU colleagues often did not. Having lived in the UK since 1985 I could, for convenience, taken out a UK passport and stopped having to use the Alien channel.

My wife is British and we met in Melbourne but after a few years together we moved to the UK for family reasons in 1985 intending to return in a few years. Unfortunately the recession in the late '80's ruined those hopes. Since then our careers have moved on. My children have been born in the UK and yet had Aussie passports within months of their birth.

What has upset me about this issue is the lack of information and support from the High Commission my early period.

In the late '80's I voted a number of times but at no time were the rules from the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 brought to my or my friends attention. I am sure I voted more than 2 years after leaving Australia, so technically was exercising a vote I had already lost. In the 90's I was travelling a lot and often missed election dates and we had changed address to the above. Those omissions are my fault and the result is I am disenfranchised now.

I have been active in Australian Business in Europe and I have yet to hear from other members whether they were prompted by the High Commission to register as an Eligible Overseas Elector. I can understand that administratively is very difficult to keep track of people. We have moved a number of times and have lost some key documents ourselves, to burglars and to time.

I was even out in Australia, in January, for over a month, upon the death of my mother, and could have re-registered if I had known.

It seems very strange and sad that while I can and have voted in every UK election while here, but can't vote in the country of my citizenship. I carry no other passport.

If it were possible to be able to register from overseas I would be a lot happier with the situation.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Blackney