

From: J. (James) David Porteous
Sent: Wednesday, 29 May 2002 5:24 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
Cc:
Subject: Submission

From: J. (James) David Porteous
E-mail:

Message:

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

Dear Sir,

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.

I write as someone who has resided in the USA since June 1992, married to an American, but not taken USA citizenship because I consider myself to be an Australian. (That might change now Section 17 has been repealed to allow dual citizenship, as doing so will provide me minor benefits re New York State taxation.)

As a non-USA citizen, I am unable to vote here - yet, because I reside here, I am unable to vote in Australia's Federal elections. (I was last registered as an elector on the role for Eastwood, NSW.)

As my wife and I will be retiring within a few years and plan to divide our time between New York and Sydney each year, the electoral process in my "homeland" is of major importance to us.

I can see no compelling reason why Australians who maintain family and citizenship links to the country should be denied access to voting on matters which impact on the lifestyle of all Australians. It seems even more illogical to deny that right to people (such as I) who actively keep abreast of all political and social issues in our homeland, visit regularly to see family and friends, and intend to spend (at least a sizeable portion of) our retirement years in the land of our birth. (In my case, that will include buying a home for the approximately half of each year my wife and I will spend there.)

Given that the next Federal election will (roughly) coincide with our retirement, to have missed out on voting on the 2001 election has deprived me of a way to "have a say" on shaping the political / social "landscape" as a prelude to my return. On that basis, and given that my circumstances are not unique - or, at least, are similar to those of other Australians who live abroad - I ask the Committee to recommend that "overseas Aussies" be allowed to vote.

Now that dual citizenship is accepted, what possible reason can there be to not see that as a logical extension of rights to ALL Australians? I live in hope that the Committee agrees.

Respectfully,

J. David Porteous