

From: Peter Higgins
Sent: Wednesday, 30 April 2008 10:40 PM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)

Subject: Submission

Message:

To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir,

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

I left Australia in January 1975, and last lived in the electoral district that included Lyons in the ACT. I have maintained my Australian citizenship throughout the entire period and now, that my children are grown and independent, I am making plans to return and live in Australia.

My siblings live in Australia with their children and I am in constant touch with them. I last voted in an Australian Election when Gough Whitlam was elected Prime Minister but have not voted or cast a ballot on referenda since. I have not been on an electoral role since nor did I register as an overseas voter.

On this side of the pond I represent a number of Australian companies and belong to a number of groups and associations affiliated with Australia and Australians - ie The Australian Canadian Chamber of Commerce, The Australian Wine Society, The Young Australian Canada Association, the Wombats Club - to name a few.

Given that my Australian Passport requires renewal every ten years, I see no difficulty in renewing my eligibility to vote in Federal Elections along with that renewal.

I feel particularly disenfranchised given that once having fallen off the the electoral roll, it remains daunting to return and be able to vote.

With the internet and modern communications, there are fewer impediments to becoming aware of the issues and the electibility of Candidates.

I would like to see that overseas Australians be able to register through their local consular office and maintain their electoral rights for the term linked to the expiry of their passport. In other words, the right to vote remains unless the passport expires.

For an expired passport, the voter would have to re-apply to gain re-registration to the electoral role.