

From: Julia Weller

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

I have been living outside Australia between April 2005 until August 2010. I hope I am currently on the Commonwealth electoral roll, in fact I will visit the site and confirm it as I have many times from overseas.

I am an Australian citizen living Back in Queensland after five years in the USA. When I left for Florida in 2005 little did I know that I would not get a legitimate vote until I returned to the country. I wanted to remain on the electoral roll and after finding the details, I completed and returned the forms so that my vote would count. Some other aussies I met did the same although some just decided to refrain from being on the roll or voting.

When news of the election was called I sent the papers to Washington to obtain my ballot papers, but as the time drew closer and I heard nothing I got more and more concerned, I called the embassy and was transferred to someone who could help me, unfortunately this transfer resulted in a voice mail, so I left a message and waited for a call back.

After 48 hours with my call not returned and with the window closing for me to arrange ballot papers I decided to sent them a second time, this time by fax so I had proof of delivery. I carefully read all the instructions and included all the required documentation i then waited again. When no papers arrived by the day prior to election day I rang again and it was suggested to me that I go to the nearest place to vote in person. This was Atlanta, I was in South Florida facing a twelve hours drive to get there!

The papers finally arrive halfway through the following week, and I was perturbed by the thought that if I failed to vote then my name would be removed from the roll, and because I knew about the 3 year absence rule I would be ineligible to re-enrol.

I decided to write a note to the electoral office and enclose with my voting papers hoping it would not cause any problems with my name being removed from the roll. I wrote to the embassy and the Minister as I was quite upset by this time. I called Brisbane talkback radio and discussion ensued regarding whether citizens abroad should have the right to vote. I pointed out, I have in fact a home in Australia, my family is here, my investments are too, I am a Citizen!

The world is a smaller place than it was 20 or even 10 years ago, Aussies are well travelled and as expats are well thought of employees all over the world.

Like them I follow all the rules and regulations, I pay taxes, isn't it my right to vote and say how my country is run?