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From: Anita Steinberg [neats@hotmail.com]
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To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Cc: neats@hotmail.com
Subject: Submission

From: Anita Steinberg
E-mail: neats@hotmail.com
Phone: +44 7835 143941

16 Longmead Road
London SW17 8PN
United Kingdom

To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir,

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

I am one of the many disenfranchised Australians living abroad, and feel strongly about current situation where I am no longer able to voice my opinions electorally, when it comes to the future of my country.

I moved to the United Kingdom in 2004 to understand another way of life, and to widen my professional experience in healthcare, and I maintain the belief that when I choose to return to Australia, the wealth of my experience gained abroad, will be put to good use to benefit other Australians.

It is important to me to maintain my strong links with friends and family in Australia, and thankfully for the Internet, I am able to keep track of the everyday goings on, both locally in Melbourne, where I am from, and nationally.

When I left Australia, I ensured that I contacted the Electoral Office to advise that despite moving abroad, I still wished to be included on the electoral role. I did not vote in the 2004 election, as I was travelling, and at that time, unaware of the process of voting in such circumstances.

When I became aware of the possibility of a 2007 election, I also became aware through The Southern Cross website, that I may have been removed from the electoral role for not voting in 2004. This was certainly the case, and when I attempted to re-register, I found that I was no longer eligible to do so after having been away from Australia for 3 years and 2 months. I was bitterly disappointed, firstly as I was not aware of this arrangement that actively disenfranchises Australians, but also as I am a passionate Australian who believes that we should all have the right of voting for a better future. Just because I am not living in Australia at this present moment, does not mean that I have no concern for my country.

I believe clearer and more accessible information regarding remaining on the electoral role, should be made available to those travelling abroad. I also feel changes need to be made to remove the 3 year cut off point for re-enrollment eligibility.

Yours faithfully

Anita Steinberg
+44 7835 143941

I feel the current arrangement for Australians living abroad to remain or re-enrol on the electoral role is far from user-friendly. I am pleased to have this opportunity to voice my concerns regarding this issue, and look forward to a change of policy to make it easier for the Australian diaspora to remain engaged and active in our country's future.