

## SUBMISSION 82

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From: Kevin B Murphy [murphy.kb@gmail.com]  
Sent: Thursday, 15 May 2008 4:32 PM  
To: Committee, EM (REPS)  
Cc: murphy.kb@gmail.com  
Subject: Submission

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Message:

To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir,

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

My personal experience relates solely to that of my exclusion from the right to vote in that election, likely many before it, which background and personal thoughts I will give below.

I have been a recipient of the Southern Cross Group's newsletter, and a highly vocal supporter of the positions that they have taken on behalf of the Aussie diaspora since they started, and have tried in my own small way to spread this information about their work through ten years past participation as a Board Director of Australia's largest overseas commercial organisation the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong.

I thank them for their good work, when it seemed at times impossible to get any serious government consideration of this issue.

I recently retired from that Austcham position due relocation to Bangkok Thailand where I am now based and from where I participate on the board of an international (but Australian owned) company that employs many Australians in key positions within hospitality in the hotel and airline industry across the globe.

And, perhaps because of my limitations on how many more times I might have got the chance to vote (I'm now 62) I am particularly miffed (tempered language here!) that again I am barred from participating in our electoral process despite being a committed and highly involved Australian.

My American wife, Donna (29 years together and her also a dual Aussie national - courtesy of a US allowance for those with Australian spouses some years back when they recognised the risk - economic and social - to their citizens married to an Aussie who had died intestate) ..... continues to vote, uninterrupted, in her US elections as a natural right even though she has lived outside of her home country for 29 years already.

She, naturally, fails to understand the anomaly we are presented with as Australians. My French, Italian and Swiss friends and many others all find this continued anomaly unusual at least, in a country held up worldwide as an example to others for its courage and contribution in the fight against oppression and for democratic ideals in the past

Our two adult children, fiercely Australian in much of their ways and character are also dual nationals by birth but and though one has recently completed her post graduate education in Australia while the other has just finished college in the US (it was cheaper through a scheme not dissimilar to those available to us for affording higher education in Oz in the 60's but no longer available!) both are bemused by this seemingly deliberate democratic omission in our (and

their) rights and interpretation of our constitution.

In my case I went away for the 'obligatory two years' in the late 60's when we didn't have the 28 hotel schools we have today (of which I have now been a long time mentor, occasional scholarship donor and currently advisor to two) and like 7 other colleagues with similar backgrounds in the few international hotels of the day, carved a successful international career over the subsequent 40 years that has taken me to increasingly more responsible and larger jobs in multi national hotel groups, overseas.

Through our efforts those groups are now well represented today in Australia, compared to in my days there, employing thousands of Australians.

While I worked on five continents in the 39 years since in roles of a complexity that could not have been matched in Australia at the time and for which today, I am now content to see many of those I have employed or mentored in their own international careers bringing expertise to the Australian hotel industry that they could only have learned overseas like myself.

Through out that whole period in my international career I have been, and am still frequently courted by visiting Aussie politicians, both State and Federal, as a strong supporter (as both buyer and supplier) of Australian export growth, and not only in the obvious fields of food and wine to the tune of many millions of dollars, and remain involved in assisting in that cause today, still from overseas.

Somehow they soon forget requests to help assist further growth we can see in the prospects for those exports or to look into this subject seriously once they get back to Canberra.

I am also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and have required many of my Australian employees to take similar qualifications over the years as an enhancement of their value as Australians to commerce worldwide.

More seriously, I continue to be a mentor for many Australians seeking international careers within my particular industry, being that of international hotel management.

Indeed, I am now working through the second generation of many such as they strive to acquire international experience and credentials like their parents, brothers and sisters before them in many instances.

No doubt, most of them, like I did, do so with the thought that we remain Australians and hope to bring the benefit of such work to the value of Australia over time.

Some, many, as you know, do go back, and some of the rest of us, like me, stay overseas helping to guide the next ones to be able also to make their own contributions to Australia in time.

My family and I are invested heavily in Australian Real estate and selected businesses and maintain a strong interest in ensuring correct and proper representation of my Australian interests by those seeking to be my elected representatives.

End of my 'beef' as the Yanks in the family would say!

I would welcome some advance in striving further for this necessary electoral reform to restore voting rights to Australians overseas.

And a last thought, and query, relative to the reasoning used by our consulates against allowing ordinary citizens overseas to maintain their voting rights?

How do Australian diplomats and government staff spending their business lives overseas get such an exception to maintain their right to vote when we can't?

And does that not provide a similar possible interpretation for the rest of us?

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I cant believe their employment as Government Servants can/should be the deciding factor - or could that be a potential bias if widely known, politically unacceptable to the rest of us. perhaps?

A potential boycott of the hordes of travelling Aussie politicians seeking ("knowledge") support and favors from overseas Aussies in the commercial sectors on their frequent trips (I hesitate to cast some as solely 'junkets') in the future otherwise could be a nw rallying cry for such a wake up call!

Yours in search of a better Autralia for all Australians,

Kevin B Murphy  
Passport E 1031548 (about my 17th I think?)