

submission 100

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From: Merran Loewenthal [office@loewenthal-law.at]
Sent: Saturday, 17 May 2008 1:34 AM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Cc: office@loewenthal-law.at
Subject: Submission

From: Merran Loewenthal
E-mail: office@loewenthal-law.at
Phone: + 43 1 535 63 93

Address:

Stock Exchange Building,
Wipplingerstr. 34/110
A-1010 Vienna, Austria

Message:

To: The Committee Secretary, JSCEM

Dear Sir,

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

I would have loved to have been able to vote in the last election particularly. I still argue with the British and Americans that democracy does not just provide privileges, but also duties and I have no problem with the fact that voting is compulsory in Australia; the British and the Americans with their fine feelings about civil liberties are shocked at the thought of having compulsory voting but are intrigued when I tell them that all it means - apart from the Treasury trying to collect AUD 100 if you do not vote - is that you have to present yourself at a polling station - or apply for a postal vote. What you do with your voting paper is your personal choice. I like to think I may have actually converted some otherwise died in the wool liberals.

The problem is that I, a passionately political person, cannot vote at all. In Austria, where I have lived for the last 30 years, I could vote if I applied for citizenship but the Austrians would probably want me to give up my Australian citizenship, which I do not wish to do. Interestingly, in Austria, the only election where voting is compulsory is for the president, who is elected directly by the people.

When I left Australia 32 years ago to live in the UK, I did not realise I had more or less given up my right to vote. In fact, in the UK I could vote in certain elections.

I am now in the strange situation that my 3 children, who have for some reason left the Old World to live in Sydney, can all vote in Australian elections, while their mother, the reason for their being in Sydney at all, cannot.

Even though I now spend quite some time in Sydney - and may spend more in future if they produce another generation - there does not seem to be an easy way of my returning to the electoral role.

Finally, I must say that I always enjoyed the act of voting and even persuaded myself that my vote had played an important part in the final decision, however laughable that may seem.

Should the committee see a way for me to exercise my democratic right to vote, I should be delighted. I wish the Committee all the very best in its deliberations and have no doubt they will come to a wise decision.

Yours sincerely,
Merran Loewenthal