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Sent: Tuesday, 6 May 2008 10:40 AM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
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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.

I would like to express my view about the disenfranchisement of Australian citizens living overseas.

My husband and I, along with our two children (we are all Australian citizens), moved to Hong Kong from our home in Melbourne in 1987 for what we then imagined would be only a few years. We did not at the time register to vote in Hong Kong, and did not realise that if we failed to vote after three years we would lose this right which we assumed was extended to all Australians.

We discovered this when during one election we arrived at the consulate to vote. The consulate was unable to tell us whether we were on the electoral roll but advised us to vote in case we were, and also that our votes would not count if we were not. We subsequently learnt that we were not on the roll. We made efforts to re-register, which entailed applying to NSW. It is a long time ago now, and I do not remember the details, but our efforts were not successful, and we have since been ineligible to vote.

Since our departure from Australia we have kept property in Melbourne, and have extensive family and other ties there, and visit frequently. We take a strong interest in events in Australia and keep up to date with current affairs. We also pay Australian tax. In a few years we will move back.

My view is that as an Australian citizen I am represented by a government for which I am not entitled to vote, a government which purports to represent the interests of all Australians. The automatic permanent disenfranchisement of an overseas citizen is inequitable, and not consistent with the democratic ideals to which the government aspires.

I am heartened that the government is examining the matter, and hope that my opinion will have some small influence in changing the present situation.

Yours sincerely,
Jennifer Hodder