

To: The Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Members of the Legal and Constitutional References Committee,

I write in response to the Committee's invitation for public comment as part of the inquiry into Australian Expatriates, and to inform the Committee about the company I have set up to assist Australian companies in the UK and Europe, Wettern Ventures.

It may be interesting to highlight some of my personal background so that the Committee may see why I have chosen to set up Wettern Ventures.

- I have a Bachelor of Science from the Australian National University (ANU);
- I marketed technology developed at the ANU in the US and Europe concurrently with doing an MBA;
- I was Vice President of an Australian public software company, launched them into the USA and ran their US operations;
- I have founded 15 companies in the UK along with setting up a venture capital fund;
- I now sit on the boards of 6 of these companies and advise them and others on international expansion.

My experiences led me to understand how difficult it is to grow Australian businesses internationally. While I was working in the US I could have used a sympathetic local who knew the US to help me get started. So it was that I decided to start Wettern Ventures with that aim: to be the Australian in the foreign market, the one who understands Australian companies and context, but who also understands the UK and Europe and can lend a hand to Australian companies. This is not entirely altruistic, as this is also the vehicle that will allow me to spend more time in Australia, perhaps even allowing me to live in Australia while running the company in the UK.

Wettern Ventures

Wettern Ventures assists Australian companies wishing to grow into the UK and Europe. Rarely do these companies have sufficient resources to be able to sustain a foreign office or even send a representative over part-time, so they must find another way. Wettern Ventures assists these companies by:

- Assisting in business planning and market penetration
- Being the public face of the company in the UK and Europe
- Having someone in the same time zone to progress business and answer queries
- Establishing the legal business and managing the day to day running of the business
- Sourcing executive and non-executive management
- Undertaking business development activities

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Initially this help is bought by the hour, then by the day, as an economic way to begin business in a foreign market. Only by spreading the risk over a number of companies can an organisation like Wettern Ventures survive.

How is this relevant to the Inquiry?

Hopefully this information is relevant to the Inquiry in a few different dimensions; it is an example of:

- An expatriate doing his bit for his country, while at the same time helping himself and hopefully enabling him to spend more time in Australia;
- How an expatriate is helping Australian businesses overcome hurdles to become global companies;
- An engagement between an expatriate and Australia as I described in my personal submission;
- The desire driven by pride that most Australians have to help the Australian underdog (I could make a lot more money working for US companies wanting to establish themselves in the UK and Europe);
- Just how much it takes to move back to Australia content in a working life once you have lived overseas;
- The benefit that an expatriate in a foreign market can have to an Australian organisation;
- How an expatriate could help other expatriates make links with Australia and Australian organisations;
- How an expatriate has become an unofficial ambassador for his country.

This is not a back-patting exercise; I wanted to give but one example of how expatriates benefit Australia. There are many, many more examples of expatriates who have as much if not more value to Australia, all spread over very diverse roles and geographies.

I urge the Committee to dig a little deeper into the many and diverse qualities that the Australian expatriate possesses, and to find ways to engage them to Australia for the longer term good of our great country. I am self-starter, but not everyone is, so ways of attracting these people are needed. I have given more time to the methods of attraction in my personal submission so shall not repeat them here.

I would ask that the Committee recommends that the Government recognise and move to address the issues facing Australian expatriates by creating a Ministerial portfolio for Expatriates.

I would also urge that the Committee recommends the establishment of a working group which reports to the Minister responsible for Expatriates to examine ways in which Australia can 'engage' with its huge expatriate community and continue the work that this Inquiry has just begun.

I also plead that this not become a political football but a true bi-partisan effort to harness the knowledge, experience and contacts of Australia's huge expatriate community as a way of overcoming our geographical isolation and allowing Australia to benefit from its diaspora.

I request that I and other members of the Australian community in the UK be allowed to participate in the Inquiry by way of video-link to the Australian High Commission in London. We feel it is important that the Inquiry seeks to involve those who are at the very centre of the Inquiry. I would be pleased to hear from the secretariat that this is possible and the details of times and dates.

wettern ventures

I would be pleased to speak to this submission should I be called by the Committee, and indeed would welcome the opportunity to do so, perhaps by video-link.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AW', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Wettern
Founder, Wettern Ventures

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