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

Dear Sir/Madam,

This submission is in response to the invitation for public comment as part of the Committee's Inquiry into Australian Expatriates.

I have left this submission as a loosely grouped set of thoughts; so that you can see what the average young expat Australian is thinking/experiencing right now. However as a short summary: I left Australia because there were not the job opportunities in my field of choice. I will not be returning to Australia soon because there are still not enough job opportunities and the house prices are too expensive. I wish there were better links between the expat and the Australian government.

I left Tasmania in 1999, on a 2 year working holiday visa to the UK. My reason for leaving was that I had been in a temporary position for 4 years and was tired of waiting for the government to finalise my position (which it had a legal obligation to do so).

I am a qualified biomedical scientist and as such there are a limited number of opportunities in Tasmania. In fact, at that time the health industry was being rationalised throughout Australia and jobs were in short supply. I worked as a biomedical scientist in the UK, as well as working as an administrator, mushroom picker, data operator, housemaid, waitress, bar tender, vineyard worker in Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand. I would never have had the opportunity to do these things in Australia.

Having lived overseas in several countries, I am impressed by many aspects of Australian governance and standard of living. It has certainly made me prouder to be an Australian, though at times I have been embarrassed with Australia's foreign policy (ie USA/Iraqi War).

I have since returned twice to Australia, for 3 and then 4 months. During the second stint, I tried to get employment, but to no avail, even with all the experience I had gained overseas. The main reason is that employers are looking for people with an education in a particular field, eg an administrator must have been to secretary school. Overseas employers are much more open to variants.

During my time away I met a South African and married him, 2 years ago. This has raised new issues, initially I wanted to return to Australia, but found the immigration process for him a very daunting idea. I was scared that if we did not provide all the information that he would be refused entry forever. I found the information required by the immigration department acceptable and I understand the reasoning behind it, it is just very difficult to obtain. We went back to South Africa last year to get some of the information required, we are still waiting for his full birth certificate, one year on!! In the meantime we are trying to find a country that will accept both of us. To that extent, I feel that Australia has let me down a bit. An enormous amount of pressure has been placed on the relationship, by trying to find a country, where we can be sponsored in. Luckily, I have now been sponsored into the UK. We will now stay in the UK until he gets his English passport, as this is a much easier process than getting into Australia!

We have also decided to move to New Zealand, I doubt very much that I will live in Australia again. Our main reason for moving to New Zealand is the house

prices. I can no longer afford to live in Hobart (prices went up 45%), especially when I cannot get a job in my preferred field. Also the relationship NZ has to the Pacific and Asia is so much more obvious than Australia's, plus the NZ government is more willing to take a stance.

I have contacted the Australian embassy in London several times. The first was required as a liaison with the English foreign office. The embassy was very helpful. The only problem, being that I could not access any help over the weekend as the situation was not an emergency, but nonetheless are very high priority to me (my traveling companion ended up being deported back to Australia). I wish there was a telephone help desk of sorts, particularly with the number of Australians now living in the UK. Problems don't always occur 9-5!. The other contacts I have had with the embassy have been in relation to my husband's visa. I found the wait long, but the people on the counter very friendly and helpful, a dramatic contrast to most other embassies in London!

I have contacted the Taxation department from overseas. In 2000 I used the net to complete and send in my tax return. I could also email for help. Last year I tried again to do this, but needed to contact the department. There is no longer the email option and several times I found myself lost in the queue on the telephone system, huge waste of money (spent \$20 just waiting, before the phonecard expired). Could there please be an alternative system for overseas people trying to access the Australian government (eg different net site, specifically aimed for people living outside of the country)? Last year whilst was at home I went to change my driver's license to my new married name, the lady on the counter refused to believe that my marriage certificate (from Ireland) was real!!! I was shocked, to say the least! Her ignorance was outstanding. People need to realise that official documentation from other countries may not look similar to those in Australia.

I have been unable to get any information regarding my rights/responsibilities whilst living outside of Australia. Also I think that I should be included any census that takes place.

Culture shock when entering Australia again, you bet! We arrived in Sydney, which has a big city attitude. All the hospitality-related staff were rude and almost arrogant. We took an overnight train to Brisbane and a person in the train next to us, at a station, flashed at me. Wolf whistles, cat calls, none of this happened in the UK. It certainly shocked me.