

From: Anne Maxwell High
Sent: Thursday, 13 June 2002 5:32 AM
To: JSCEM@aph.gov.au

Subject: Submission

From: Anne Maxwell High

Message:

To: The Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee
on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir,

This submission is in response to the JSCEM\'s invitation for public comment as part of its Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2001 Federal Election.

I moved from Carlton, Australia (the Melbourne Electorate) in 1998 to the USA. I currently have permanent residency in the USA, that is a greencard, but I am not an American citizen.

Currently, I am not eligible to vote in either Australia or the USA. I feel I have slipped between the cracks in both nations.

When I left Australia, I phoned the AEC to find out what to do about voting. The person asked how long I would be out of the country and I replied \"indefinitely\". He said he would therefore take me off the roll. I assented to this, not realising this was not easily reversed unless I returned to live in Australia. With so much going on in making the move, it was a brief conversation I barely thought about. I realized the implications only later.

My reason for moving to the States was to be with the man who was to become my husband. Decisions like this are not black and white as bureaucracy would like to have it. I had no idea whether our relationship would work out, or when I would return to Australia.

Decisions like this also do not indicate a disconnection from Australia which I still regard as my first homeland. My perspective on political issues has changed with my status as an expat. For example, I am more interested in Australia\'s place on the international scene, and relations between Australia and America. These sorts of issues would affect my voting preferences.

Decisions like mine also indicate the times are a-changing, and the Internet is opening opportunities for people\'s lives to be lived out in more than one country. Laws need to reflect the reality of a more mobile, outward-looking population.

I would like to see the voting regulations of Australia be flexible enough to reflect the individual lives of its citizens living beyond its borders. Specifically the two-year limit on eligibility is too restrictive. Non-compulsory voting for as long as the person remains a citizen would be ideal. This could be facilitated by the excellent AEC website.

Sincerely,

Anne Maxwell High