

Sent: Monday, 10 February 2014 2:32 PM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Subject:



Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

I have been very concerned about the my ineligibility to vote in Australian elections because I have been living in China for ten years. I am the Chairman of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai and, as such, have very regular contact with the broad Australian community in China. Furthermore, the Chamber is regularly called on by Australian and State Governments for access to that community. It is an injustice that we cannot vote after living outside of Australia for a statutory period.

It is noted that the Government is concerned about “soft diplomacy” in the Asia region. I would suggest that there are few better means for improvement of multi-lateral relationships than through the efforts of Australians who are the face on the ground in the foreign markets of the world. To deny us a vote, putting us in the same category as criminals and the insane, is an insult and disrespectful of the part that we play in Australia’s international engagement. Furthermore, because we do have regular close contact with our governments’ leaders and access to all of the media in Australia, this is an exceptionally well-informed Australian community.

I wrote an article in the Australia China Connections Magazine expressing my concern after the last Australian election. The link to that article is <http://www.chinaconnections.com.au/index.php/en/magazine/current-issue/1946-austcham-shanghai-valuing-the-contribution-of-australian-citizens-in-china>

I have also brought the matter to the attention of my “former” local federal member Andrew Robb and State member Louise Asher. Both of whom were unaware of this disenfranchisement. I expect to see the Prime Minister and other leaders during this year and will bring my concerns to their attention as they visit Shanghai.

I call upon the JSCEM to recommend the repeal of Section 94A(2)(c) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 so that expatriate adult Australians who left Australia to reside abroad more than three years ago can enroll to vote.

I believe that following the High Court's decisions in [Roach](#) in 2007 and [Rowe](#) in 2010, Section 94A(2)(c) may well be unconstitutional, because it excludes a significant part of the Australian people from the electorate.

It would be my pleasure to speak with the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, should the Committee wish to hear the views of Australians abroad. In my view, this is an injustice that must be a hangover from a bygone era and should be immediately corrected.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Arkell

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