

I am an Australian citizen living in France since 1991. I have been disenfranchised since the first election after my departure and I have no immediate possibility of ever re-enrolling to vote in Australia.

However, as a citizen, I am still subject to Australian laws, I still form part of the wider Australian community, I am an informal ambassador for the country of my birth. I have also brought into the world two young Australian citizens, who love and respect their “other” country and who are impatient to be able to spend more time there.

Over 100 years ago, Australia was one of the pioneers in one aspect of voting rights at least, the vote for women. Today, many countries around the world not only allow their expatriate citizens to vote in all elections, but are also giving them direct representation in their national parliaments.

A recent example is France. At the next French national elections in 2012, French expatriates will be able to vote directly for their own Members of Parliament. Eleven “expatriate” electorates have recently been created for the 1.27 million French citizens living outside France: six across Europe, two for Africa and the Near and Middle East, two for the Americas, and one for Asia, Australia and the Pacific.

French expatriates can already vote in all elections, and can also vote for the “Assembly for French nationals living abroad”, which then elects twelve Senators to represent expatriate interests in the Senate.

In addition, the possibility of voting by Internet is being actively pursued.

The future will be global: Australia’s will lie in its careful marshalling of all its resources, both onshore and offshore.