

**To The members of the Electoral Reform Secretariat, Canberra**

**While I am aware that the deadline imposed for "officially timed" comments on the recent Green and other Papers regarding the examination of the voting rights of Overseas Australians may have passed, I would like to submit my own further comments below for your consideration and inclusion, as from an Australian Citizen resident abroad at this time.**

**Trying to stay informed, and on your time, as an Australian Citizen Abroad, is not always easy, and when scrambling also in a recession to keep companies resilient, to make a living, supporting staff - both also citizens and others, and representing Australian interests, along with other priorities - my personal concerns, such as this, slip off the radar screen sometimes.**

**Gentlemen,**

**I draw your attention to the arguments contained in paragraph 4.40 of the recent paper on electoral reform, and specifically that section headed:**

**"4.40 Alternatively, it might be argued against an expansion of the expatriate franchise that:**

- it is inappropriate to extend voting rights to individuals who may not be directly affected by the results of elections, particularly if there would be a relatively large number of permanent external electors compared to the number of domestic electors; **(Red Herring no. 1)**
- 'it is not appropriate to divert more resources to an elector group that is not covered by the compulsory enrolment or voting provisions, and away from assisting those that are so covered to comply with the law';116 **(Red Herring no. 2)**
- 'requirements for eligible overseas electors to regularly update their enrolment and vote in Australian elections are appropriate and form a valid method of measuring whether a continuing interest in Australian political affairs exists';117 and **(Red Herring no. 3)**
- voting rights for external citizens may raise issues regarding ensuring appropriate transparency and dispute resolution for external election processes.118 "**(Red Herring no.4)**

**As an Australian born citizen and one who has dedicated much of his life to ensuring the extension of Australian interests abroad from a private industry sector perspective on five continents including extensive stints as a member and Board member of numerous Australian associations overseas (including 10 years as a Director of Austcham Hong Kong - the largest such commercial organization advancing the business interests of Australian and Australian companies abroad ) I take issue with each of those four comments which you will see I have labeled as **Red Herrings**, i.e specious arguments that would and should have little bearing on the consideration for improvement outlined in paragraph 4.39. which do those (same?) drafters more credit for intelligent thinking (in the interests of Australian citizens rights) than the points against such reform raised above in 4.40.**

**Allow me my viewpoint therefore on that comment in the paper shown as point no.1 above: "it is inappropriate to extend voting rights to individuals who may not be directly affected by the results of elections, particularly if there would be a relatively large number of permanent external electors compared to the number of domestic electors" - I would argue that all Australian citizens, and passport holders, regardless of their location, are affected by the results of Australian elections by nature of the fact that they are citizens of that country and will likely be affected by decisions made by such governments regardless, though perhaps to differing degrees dependent on such decisions.**

**As to the concern as to the number of such potential electors "compared to the number of domestic electors" where does the Citizenship Act state that such domestic electors have more rights than any other Australians? And do you seriously think there are that many that your electoral position might be at risk, if they did vote?**

**Again, not the right reason to deny citizens their rights, perhaps?**

**Any serious concern over such numbers would seem to have more of a political party overtone than justice and any serious national interest at heart.**

**Should even that thought prevail in that concern however, than simply try by making such voting non-compulsory, as many other nationalities can exercise should they "choose not to vote at home" while overseas. That could solve that worry that overseas electors might unduly influence the results of any particular party's chances at electoral victory. A similar concern that numbers in one State might be a greater influence on national electoral results than an other state due their size would be as equally inane.**

**Lastly, on this point, the fact that other Australian citizens, sent or appointed by governments (and dependent on that same source for their livelihoods) are given that continued right to vote regardless of their serving overseas (e.g. diplomats, and armed forces etc.) would seem to emphasise that this right is not difficult to protect, or to grant, but just as arbitrarily given or withheld by governments of the day.**

**Point no. 2 - 'it is not appropriate to divert more resources to an elector group that is not covered by the compulsory enrolment or voting provisions, and away from assisting those that are so covered to comply with the law';116 - .... And why not if they are citizens of Australia?**

**Isn't that the whole point of this debate - that we citizens serving overseas are not covered by the current voting provisions, and/or are no longer eligible as they have been interpreted in the past, when as citizens under the constitution we should be?**

**Point no. 3 - 'requirements for eligible overseas electors to regularly update their enrolment and vote in Australian elections are appropriate and form a valid method of measuring whether a continuing interest in Australian political affairs exists';117 - our very own Catch 22 - if you cant get to be eligible , you cant renew and in not renewing you cant stay or get to be eligible! - or in the more vernacular - your comment that all is order in those requirements that can measure a continuing interest in Australian political affairs exist now is neither "appropriate or form a valid method" - .....Bull Dust..!**

**A continuing interest in Australian Political affairs is however being summarily denied us as citizens overseas (for whatever reason) - which we are trying to make clear to you**

- and you need to acknowledge and correct that for ALL Australian Citizens not just the ones who might live in your own electorate or backyard.

At the same time, such "continuing interest in Australian political affairs" should not alone be the reason to be eligible for voting but in our normal rights as legitimate and proper citizens of Australia.

**Point no.4 - "voting rights for external citizens may raise issues regarding ensuring appropriate transparency and dispute resolution for external election processes".118 - Let me get this right? You have now to trust the official Australian Representatives to do everything else correctly but you don't to think they can handle the integrity or supervision of a temporary polling booth in an Embassy or Consulate?**

**Or your IT Boffins in Canberra to devise a simple overseas postal voting system that works?**

**Is that what you are trying to say with this point? Or, like the above, is this just an other diversion to keep it off the Agenda for a possible resolution? Are "External Citizens", as you describe us above, any less Citizens because of that?**

**Please act now and take responsibility, and without partisan bias, for solving a mess swept too long under the rug, that continues to deny a section of our Australian citizenry their natural rights.**

**Yours sincerely**

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