

2022 Presidents Report: Paul Smith

Victory at last!

The highlight of the year was the election of a Labor Government on May 21st led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Anthony Albanese is well known to us having met with for ALP Abroad at least four occasions including launching our campaign in 2019. ALP Abroad contributed to the successful result again with Labor coming from behind to win Gilmore on absentee votes including overseas votes, again showing that every vote counts

The overseas vote was far lower in 2022, in large part because of the decision of the AEC to close 67 in person overseas booths. The total overseas vote was 39,816, a figure that is lower by 22,022 votes (-35.9%) from the 61,838 votes cast in 2019. In London, the figure was 11,621 down - 1,807 from the 13,428 cast in 2019. Due to the AEC only promoting postal votes the number of in person votes at Australia House, was 6,827 votes down from 12,952 in 2019.

ALP Abroad have made a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters calling for an end to the discrimination against overseas voters that resulted in only 7% of Overseas Australians voting in 2022, a record low.

ALP Abroad is a voluntary organisation that works to ensure that overseas Australians vote Labor. While we work closely with the ALP and receive some support, our success is due to the efforts of volunteers which in 2022 was again outstanding.

I hope this report shows how we have made a difference and had fun along the way!



Our campaign launch photo outside Big Ben in Parliament Square featured in Australian Financial Review and was widely shared on social media promoting overseas voting.

Our Volunteer effort

Staffing the largest polling station in Australia elections May 9th and May 20th could not have been done without the help of the 41 people who volunteered to help listed below

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|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mike Steele | 15. Justin Ditton | 28. Lauren Edwards |
| 2. Vanessa Picker | 16. Rosemary Chan | 29. Gareth Myton |
| 3. Alex Readford | 17. Harry Stratton | 30. Andrew Harden |
| 4. Nick James | 18. Ken Penton | 31. David Power |
| 5. John Spellar MP | 19. Ryan Turner | 32. Robin May |
| 6. Joseph Moore | 20. Ken Penton | 33. John McTiernan |
| 7. Sophie Nyaguy | 21. Rebecca McCann | 34. Steven Reynolds |
| 8. Martin Thirlaway | 22. Matilda Gillis | 35. Callan Tree |
| 9. Matt Incerti | 23. Roland McCall | 36. Callum Mcleod |
| 10. David Saunderson | 24. Isaac Wright | 37. Joel Northcott |
| 11. Melanie Saunderson | 25. Lloyd Russell Moyle
MP | 38. Amy Fallon |
| 12. Eric Sheng | 26. Andrew McKeown | 39. Leo Bryant |
| 13. Catherine West MP | 27. Maudie Love | 40. Doug Henshall |
| 14. James Bidgood | | 41. Paul Smith |

Special thanks must be made to our booth coordinator Mike Steele who has worked on every election since 1980 at Australia House, making this his 16th election!



Volunteers Andrew Harden and Alexander Readford at Australia House

People who also deserve a special mention for essential work in the campaign are,

- Justin Ditton for being our Treasurer and looking after our money.
- Alex Readford for organising our election party at the North London Tavern so we could watch the results live on Saturday Morning.
- Vanessa Picker for help calling our members.
- Eric Sheng for our social media.
- Susan Lyons for doing great campaigning about the closed polling stations.
- Isaac Wright for running the zettle machine and being secretary.
- Elias Hallaj, who continues to provide great support from the National Secretariat.

The AEC axed 67 polling overseas stations there were not as many polling stations as previous With Elias's help we were able to ensure there was some level of ALP presence handing out How to votes at the following 6 cities.

Bali
Phnom Penh

Paris
New York

Berlin
London



Left: Amelia Frelander, Jeremy Chan and Carl Holm at the Berlin Polling station

Right; Mandy Cheung and the ALP Abroad team in Phnom Penh



Our London election Party

We had a great London election Party at the Camden Eye attended by over 100 people.



Some of the smiling faces at the Camden Eye.

Our other successful social activities for the year include:

- Our Christmas party with traditional Aussie goodies.
- Invitations to Kevin Rudd talk.
- Tickets for Premier of Conviction Politics documentaries.
- Meeting with ALP National Secretary Paul Erickson.

The right of overseas Australian to vote

The right to vote was denied to tens of thousands of Australians who live Overseas in the 2022 election by the;

- Axing of 67 overseas polling stations by the Australian Electoral Commission in 2022.
- The Commonwealth Electoral act discriminating against overseas Australians by imposing different rules for overseas Australians that make it difficult to enrol and keep your vote. At the last election only 39,816 overseas Australian voted.

This is less than 7% of the approximately 577,255 Australians living permanently or working overseas, including 165,000 in London.

In a democracy that prides itself on a near universal voter participation, only 7% of any group of citizens being able to vote is unacceptable.

In the 2022 Federal election;

- only 6% of overseas Australians were able to register to vote as overseas voter prior to the 2022 election due to the discriminatory nature of Commonwealth Electoral Act making it harder for Overseas Australian to vote and the failure of the AEC to actively promote voting in Overseas citizens.
- 59.3% less people voted where the AEC axed in person voting, at the 69 overseas voting locations postal voting was the only option.

Our submission which is on the ALP Abroad website calls for the:

1. Commonwealth Electoral Act to amended so that Overseas voters can enrol to vote and stay enrolled on the same basis as all citizens.
2. All overseas diplomatic missions operate as pre polling stations for the same period as elections in Australia.
3. That the AEC be mandated to actively promote enrolment and voting to overseas Australians.

Thank you

I would like to thank all the outgoing executive for their support. We have a number of long serving members of the executive standing down tonight who deserve special acknowledgement.

- **Mike Steele:** who has been our booth coordinator at every Federal election since 1980, a truly amazing commitment for which is a life member of ALP Abroad.
- **Angelo Sommariva;** who has been our returning officer for 9 years, the longest anyone has ever held the role.
- **Isaac Wright:** who has been our secretary for 5 years, again the longest period anyone has held the role to my knowledge. (he is staying as an Exec member)

Last meeting, I announced I would be standing down as President after 15 years between 2005 and 2010 (2009-2010 as co-President with Rania Wannous) and again from 2012 until present.

It has been absolute pleasure being involved in ALP Abroad which I would recommend to anyone. While being leading the organisation though 6 Federal elections would be enough reward for any political enthusiast, what matters most to me is the comradeship and genuine friendship I have found since coming to my first meeting 20 years ago when I first arrived in the UK in 2002.

What is most important about ALP Abroad is that everyone is everyone's friend and I feel that sense of friendship with everyone. I do need to acknowledge that without early friendship of Scott Plimpton and Dani Neal, I would not have lasted a winter and the friendships with Eamon O'Hearn-Large, Nick James, David Saunderson and Angelo Sommariva have been especially important to me over the years. I would not have stayed in the UK if not for the sense of place and purpose I found though being involved in ALP Abroad and my local community as a local Labour Councillor and I whole heartedly recommend being involved in both to anyone.

The opportunity as General Manager [Civility](#) to create a new progressive institution in an Australia under an Albanese Labor government is the right opportunity for family and me. I will however be back to visit family and friends and perhaps even help defeat the Tories in two years' time and hope to remain in touch. I will always cherish being part of the larger ALP Abroad family.



ALP Abroad AGM Committee Room 18 House of Commons October 17th 7pm

- 1) Introductions and Welcome.**
- 2) Finalisation of memberships.**
- 3) Apologies-** Ken Penton, Roland McCall, William Jenkins, Melanie Saunderson, Eamon O'Hearn-Large, Alex Readford and Lauren Edwards
- 4) President's report 2021/2022**
- 5) Treasurers Report 2021/2022**
- 6) Election of Officers conducted by returning officer Angelo Sommariva**
 - President
 - Vice Presidents (2)
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Booth Co-ordinator
 - Campaign Co-ordinator
 - Executive Members (at least eight, can be as many as people are interested)
 - Returning officer
- 7) New President thanks outgoing executive and moves Motion appointing New Treasurer, Secretary and President along with Vice President Nick James as signatory of bank account**
- 8) Guest speaker Catherine West MP.**
- 9) AOB**
- 10) Close meeting and Tour of House of Commons**