



## British Pensions in Australia Inc.

ABN 42 186 383 389

### Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

#### HELD ON TUESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022 AT 6 pm AEDT via ZOOM

**Attending:** Committee members: Patrick Edwards (President), Cheryl Harvey (Secretary), Brian Owles (Treasurer), Tony Walsh (Minutes Secretary), Jonathan Hobbs and Roger Tuffley were present.

There were 19 other members present.

By invitation Lord Rennard from London.

**Apologies:** There were no apologies.

**Opening:** The meeting opened at 6 pm and it was agreed that the proceedings would be recorded.

**Minutes of 2020 AGM:** The minutes of the AGM held on the 10th November 2021 were approved. Proposed by the TW Seconded by JH. Approved unanimously.

**Matters arising:** There were no matters arising.

**President's Report:** The President welcomed everyone to the BPiA Annual General Meeting. He opened by saying that the BPiA annual report for 2021-2022 has been on the website for some months. He continued by providing a report of activities to date.

Mr. Edwards went on to say:

*"Roger Tuffley and Cheryl Harvey have both indicated they no longer wish to serve on the committee. In Roger's case his health makes it difficult for him to continue.*

*Cheryl has been on the committee for over ten years and believes it is now time to step back. Cheryl has kindly agreed to continue as a volunteer helping administer our membership records and renewals.*

*I thank Cheryl and Roger for their service to BPiA.*

*I thank the committee for their contribution to BPiA and their willingness to give up their time to pursue the campaign on behalf of members.*

*I have been nominated to be a committee member for the coming year and I have accepted the nomination. Similarly, Brian, Jonathan and Tony have been nominated and have accepted their nominations. Colin Bloodworth has kindly put his name forward and has received the required nominations.*

*This has resulted in there being two vacancies on our committee.*

*The foundation for the ability of BPiA to continue to campaign on member's behalf is the great work done by the volunteers who ensure our administration occurs efficiently and actively. A special thanks goes to our Membership Officer, Geoff Dunsford and the others working silently in the background, Stuart Coleman, Trevor Collison, Jan Groat and Phil Summerfield. We can always use more volunteers. Please contact me if you can help.*

*BPiA continues to provide help to members and non-members. The 1300 number is answered 7 days a week throughout the year. Our website attracts much interest. We are often telephoned by people who have found the website thanks to Google and believe we are the Pensions Service.*

*The turmoil in the UK government over the past few months has been unsettling as it has been difficult to know who is responsible for state pensions.*

*Attempts to obtain statements from each of the political parties on their policy regarding state pensions paid to non-residents has resulted in the Conservative Party confirming it has no plans to change the current policy. The Liberal Democrats, SNP, DUP and Plaid Cymru have all said they will end the policy and treat all pensioners equitably. The Labour Party has refused to provide a policy statement.*

*It was made clear to me, whilst I was in London recently that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will have no influence on any decision to change the frozen pensions policy. The decision to change the current policy is reserved for the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.*

*These two key decision makers will be heavily influenced by the Mandarins in Treasury. The core concern of Treasury is that a change in policy will open the UK government to a claim for back payments.*

*It has always been BPiA's campaign objective not to claim for back payment. BPiA wants our pensions to be unfrozen from a point in time. BPiA is realistic enough to understand that a claim for back payment will be unacceptable.*

*We are aware that a reciprocal agreement is not needed for the UK government to pay a fair rate of state pension to pension recipients living in Australia and elsewhere pensions are currently frozen.*

*However, it has been suggested that a reciprocal agreement will eliminate the risk of opening the UK government to claims for back payments.*

*Membership attrition has been a continuing concern for your committee. Each month we lose several members. Overwhelmingly, and sadly, this is due to mortality. Covid and the recent bad weather in the eastern States of Australia have restricted our ability to participate in or stage events to attract new members to replace those lost.*

*This continuing attrition is affecting our finances and we are expecting to incur a substantial loss in the current financial year.*

*The committee is examining ways to deal with this.*

*The President said that with Covid abating and with hope for better weather in this coming summer and autumn we can finally look forward to attracting more new members.*

*I remind the meeting that BPIA has a policy of freezing annual membership fees for as long as our pensions are frozen. We have been able to sustain this policy for twenty years despite having to incur expenses at current prices. However, given our financial position and the current high rate of inflation, this is a policy that we will have to reconsider."*

Proposed by CH that the President's report be adopted. Seconded by Stuart Coleman. Adopted unanimously

**Treasurer's Report:**

The Treasurer Brian Owles reported that the results for the year ended 30 June 2022 show a virtual break-even for the 12 months.

He said:

*"The intent for the year was to increase our membership which would give a boost to our revenue to enable our cause to be promoted more strongly.*

*Unfortunately, despite major efforts to be made by the President the membership and revenue did not increase. BPIA ended the year with a similar balance in the bank as the previous year, around \$23,000.*

*One major positive was the completion of the setup of our Member membership program which has enabled us to handle members details and manage subscription receipts efficiently on-line. As a result we no longer rent the office space in Edgecliff.*

*The major expenditure is our contribution to the costs of International Consortium of British Pensioners (ICBP). This organisation funds the works carried out in Westminster by Tendo Consulting to get the UK Government to change its policy on "Frozen Pensions".*

*The figures in the Income Statement speak for themselves."*

*Mr Owles added comments about the current financial year.*

*"It should be noted that the first five months of the 2022-23 year have resulted in a deficit of around \$5,000 with bank resources now down to \$17,000.*

*This situation is primarily due to a drop in the level of subscriptions received. There has been approximately a 12% reduction from last year.*

*This loss of income has partially been caused by loss of members and also a lower level of donations.*

*We encourage members to renew their membership swiftly and at the same time to consider giving a donation. As you are aware we have not ever increased our annual subscription fees, despite rising costs over the years."*

Proposed by CH that the financial report be adopted. Seconded by Stuart Coleman. Adopted unanimously.

**Election of Committee:**

The President reported that valid nominations had been received for existing committee members himself, Brian Owles, Jonathan Hobbs and Tony Walsh. An additional nomination had been received from Colin Bloodworth. As there were seven vacancies on the committee the President declared them elected. Jeff Gunningham and Stuart Coleman volunteered from the floor of the meeting offered to serve as committee members and were duly appointed.

**Special Resolution**

The President introduced the special resolution explaining that the current objects clause in the constitution describes why BPiA exists. It has not been changed since BPiA was established in 2003. The proposed wording brings it into line with current practice.

It was proposed that the objects clause in the constitution of British Pensions in Australia be amended to replace the existing objects with the following

*“The objects of the association shall be:*

- a. to contribute to the well-being of people who are entitled to or, with the passage of time or the payment of contributions to the UK National Insurance Scheme, will be entitled to a UK State Pension (recipients of UK State Pension”)*
- b. to advocate on behalf of recipients of UK State Pension with the objective that they receive the same rate of UK State Pensions as people living in the UK.*
- c. to enable recipients of UK State Pensions to obtain their proper entitlement by guiding them to information concerning UK State Pension*
- d. to network with such other organisations that have the same or similar objectives.*
- e. to do such other things that are ancillary to the objects referred to in this clause.”*

Given the restraints on using ZOOM for meetings the President asked for members who wished to vote against or abstain to indicate their intentions in the chat bar. As there no indications on the chat bar the resolution was declared passed.

**Any other business:**

**QUESTION from member Paul Swain:**

*“My concern is that, with the UK now having no money, there seems to be no chance that we will be able to get any UK Government to change their stance. I guess the only possible hope of achieving this would be via the legal action you discussed in the newsletter. But assuming that the legal case is impractical, or fails, is there much point at the moment putting a lot of effort into campaigning in the UK? Wouldn't we be better working to influence the*

*Australian Government, so that they are the ones who are dealing with the UK Government?*

**ANSWER from the President**

*“There will never be a right time to pursue our case. There will never be a time when the Chancellor will stand at the despatch box and announce: “I have run out of things to spend taxpayer’s money on – can members please give me suggestions for future expenditure”.*

*Essentially, the issue of frozen pensions is a political issue. If the will is there, money can be found to fund any issue. Take the support for Ukraine as an example. I believe this is a justifiable and laudatory use of taxpayer’s money but prior to the invasion of Ukraine, the idea of the UK taxpayer spending billions on a far away country and on which people in the UK know little was inconceivable.*

*We will have to be certain that a legal case will succeed before we commit our members’ money to it. Firstly, because we do not wish to waste our members’ money but secondly and more importantly, having lost one case, the Carson case, we will be offering the UK government our campaign on a platter if we lose a second case.*

*The decision to end the unfair policy of frozen pensions will be made in London. I can be more specific. It will be made in London by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Secretary of State for Work and Pension will not have input into the decision. If the UK Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer see that there is more to be gained by changing the policy that is lost through increased expenditure, the decision will not be delayed.*

*The Australian government cannot change the UK government’s policy, but it can influence that decision. The Canadian government has twice requested the UK government to renegotiate a reciprocal social security agreement and twice been rebuffed. But it has been a lone voice. If Australia was to be asking the same question, the pressure would not be doubled, it would be exponentially stronger.”*

Presentation by  
Lord Rennard

Mr. Edwards noted that the formal proceedings of the AGM were complete. He told the meeting that we are very fortunate to have a presentation by Lord Rennard directly from London. He introduced Lord Rennard as a Liberal Democrat life peer who was instrumental in getting the changes to the Elections Act that will result in the removal of the 15-year limit on voting by non-residents.

The floor was passed to Lord Rennard, who then spoke to the meeting.

*“I thank BPiA for the opportunity to speak.*

*The ability to speak to BPiA members demonstrates the wonders of Zoom. The House of Lord had used it a lot for debates during the lockdowns. If you examine Hansard for the period, you’ll find the word most frequently used in*

*Parliament during that period was unmute. It takes a bit of time getting used to this routine.*

*I have been involved in politics for something like 49 years. I started as a teenager in the city of Liverpool and was involved in student politics at the same time as Cheryl Harvey's brother, Nick, who became the MP for North Devon. Nick and I used to debate issues at student conferences such as the future of nuclear weapons. Nick eventually became the UK's Armed Forces Minister.*

*Meanwhile, helped manage his party's election campaigns, enabling the Liberal Democrats to enter a peacetime coalition for the first time since 1922. I never stood to get elected, but the then Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown nominated me for membership of the House of Lords in 1999.*

*If you know Liverpool, where I come from, you might recognise a slight Scouse accent and a habit of speaking very quickly. This was because people from Liverpool always have a lot to say.*

*I have been asked to talk to the AGM about the Elections Bill, which became an Act of Parliament this year. I want also to say a little about my support for unfreezing frozen pensions.*

*The Elections Act has many provisions. One of the most significant will be that it will make photographic ID compulsory if you vote in person at a polling station. Another significant feature is it will bring the UK's electoral Commission more under the control of the government of the day. And also, as you've noted, it will lift the 15-year limit for UK citizens living overseas to register to vote.*

*The 15-year limit was often described as being arbitrary, but it wasn't quite so arbitrary as it might appear at first. The reason for it was that electoral registration officers had to keep printed copies of the electoral registers for 15 years before disposing of them. It was therefore relatively easy to check if someone was once entitled to vote from a particular address.*

*Such a rule made little sense in the digital age when copies of the electoral registers can all be kept electronically. There may be a problem going forward to ascertain how someone can demonstrate which was the last UK constituency in which they lived. If they are not on the register, they will have to prove that they lived at an address which may no longer exist or they may not have documentation to show that they were once resident in a particular electorate.*

*That is partly why the change has not yet come into force. We are still waiting for the detailed regulations to be published, and until they are approved by both houses of Parliament, you can still only register to vote in a constituency where you were previously on the electoral register within the last 15 years.*

*For people who've been away longer, we wait to see exactly what evidence of previous residency will be required. There may be some way of vouching for someone that you know.*

*There won't be an equivalent scheme for people who turn up at polling stations without the requisite form of photo ID. That's something which he suggested should happen and which happens in Canada.*

*Where Parliament did have consensus was that all the parties supported a change to abolish the 15-year limit.*

*There were differences about how UK citizens overseas should be represented. What the Liberal Democrats argued for was for the creation of overseas constituencies, as in France.*

*It always seemed to the Liberal Democrats that UK citizens living overseas were concerned with issues such as pensions, possibly taxation and perhaps public services in anticipation of their return to the UK. UK citizens living overseas should have a say on national and international policies, on foreign policy and defence, on climate change and issues such as international law.*

*This interest was particularly strong at the time of the Brexit referendum, in which many people had a legitimate interest but were disenfranchised.*

*At the same time, you can't expect such people to be able to vote for an individual constituency MP in the UK on issues such as the future of a local hospital, a controversial bypass, the record of a particular MP or local issues for an area where you've not lived for several decades.*

*The answer was, in my view, to follow what the French do, which is to allocate specific constituencies for their citizens with seats in the French National Assembly for different parts of the world. London, for example, has the sixth biggest French population of any city, and so it has its own representative. There are 11 such constituencies for French overseas voters and those elected to serve the overseas constituencies can have a powerful influence in debates and on the making of laws.*

*I prefer to see things done that way but that's not what's happening now*

*In my opinion, the enfranchising of overseas citizens was not the government's prime motivation in proposing the change. I think it was more about extending the right to donate to political parties. than to vote for them*

*In 2000 and in some of the first debates on the Elections Bill, I proposed in the House of Lords that foreign donations should be made illegal. If you are a UK citizen living overseas and you're on the electoral register because you'd been on the register within the last 15 years, you can donate. But if you'd been away for more than 15 years, you can't donate. So, with removal of the 15-year limit, that restriction will go.*

*We will still have the problem that even if you register to vote, it will remain quite difficult to cast a vote in time for polling day.*

*That was a point I raised several times during the debate. I raised the issue of the ability of members of the armed forces serving abroad to vote in general elections. I had said that we were prepared to let them die for their country but the difficulties of applying to vote and then returning postal votes in time are so great that virtually none of them will succeed in voting.*

*There is a way around this, in my view, that would assist people living overseas casting their votes. In many countries whilst in-person votes must be cast at a polling station by polling day there is then a period after that for postal votes to arrive. In Australia, it's 14 days.*

*So, you have those people going to a polling station casting their vote and those votes being counted on what's called Election Day. But for two weeks afterwards, the postal votes come in from over the world and they can change the result in particular constituencies. This allows people from overseas to participate more easily.*

*The only progress I was able to make, after a lot of questions on the issue, was that applications to vote by post will in future be accepted electronically, but not the votes themselves. That was a step too far when people living in the UK can't vote electronically. But previously, if an election was announced, you have to apply for a postal vote by post and wait to receive the ballot paper in the post and then you have to post it back. Many postal votes came back after polling day and so didn't count.*

*All those issues are things I've been involved in on the elections Bill, to try and help UK citizens overseas be able to vote.*

*I now turn briefly to the issue of how BPIA might focus on the issue of greatest concern to you: frozen pensions.*

*You need to maximise your influence, and I have been trying to help with what he has been doing on electoral legislation.*

*I know that BPIA has been working closely with a firm of consultants, Tendo Consulting, who I know very well. They know how things work in Westminster. BPIA needs people who know how things work in Westminster to guide you and help you lobby MPs.*

*It has been very nice to be lobbied personally as a peer, but on any financial measure, MPs have the sole say. The House of Lords can make the case, but we can't vote.*

*So, how do you make a difference? Well, it means encouraging the huge numbers of people who are British citizens overseas registering to vote.*

*Where you can be guided, and I am happy to work with Tendo Consulting on this, is to register as many people as possible in one of the 100 to 150 constituencies that may determine the outcome of the next general election.*

*To make those votes count, it means, in my view, appointing a proxy. A proxy is a person who can attend the relevant polling station on your behalf. Even with applications to vote by post being made electronically, the time taken to vote by post is still so slow and postal services across the globe so variable that voting by post actually means very often your vote won't count.*

*By appointing someone you know and trust or working with organisations sympathetic to BPIA to identify people in the relevant constituencies who might be able to go to the polling station for you, your vote will count.*



*Any such person is only allowed to vote for two others. You can't get one person who goes round all the polling stations voting for you. They can only do it twice. That requires, in my view, a lot of international coordination to improve registration, apply for proxy votes and get it done in advance of the general election.*

*I think the next UK general election will come in 2024, but it could come any time. Until fairly recently, the UK had a fixed term Parliament Act, which was introduced by the Coalition government after 2010, saying the election will be every five years on a five-year cycle like in many countries.*

*The Conservatives did away with that, thinking that the governing party would always have an advantage if it controlled the timing of the election. An election can be called on no more than five weeks' notice.*

*Therefore, the time to mobilise is not when an election is announced, but it has to be done in anticipation of the election. I repeat that I am happy to work with Tendo and advise them on some of this.*

*Of course, what needs to be done is for those people who have a vote to make it clear in advance of the election to MPs and to candidates who might win in those seats, that they will be casting those proxy votes or you'll be casting your votes in accordance with your views on the issue of frozen pension.*

*BPIA is doing very well in stirring up interest in the UK media. The extracts seen in papers like the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, which perhaps might have particular influence with Conservative MPs, is very strong.*

*With all those things, I just hope sincerely and personally that you can use the democratic system to try and get the justice that you deserve.*

*I am happy to take any of your questions."*

The President thanked Lord Reynold for his informative and clear presentation. He asked if anyone had any questions.

A question came from Colin Rainsbury of Canada. *"Canadians living overseas sent their vote to the embassy or consulate in the country in which they lived before the deadline, it was sent onto into Canada. These votes, of course, were counted and they can often affect the result. On another point, I wonder, as a member of National Service, can my National Service registration be used to prove his eligibility to vote? I note that I receive a Canadian pension because of Army service."*

Lord Rennard responded; *"If you were living in the UK in 1955, you will be able to vote in UK parliamentary elections. But it should be in the last constituency in which you were resident and you will have to prove to the local electoral registration officer that you were resident there. You may be able to get somebody who can prove that they were resident to vouch for you. This is the situation in Canada where someone can turn up at a polling station and vouch for somebody who doesn't have the requisite form of ID.*

*What you say about postal votes is one of many suggestions I made to the elections minister in the House of Lords because I was concerned that there's*

*no point saying people can vote from overseas if they were UK citizen when, in practice, as you say, the postal votes are so slow they don't count. I suggested a system in which postal votes were sent to embassies and were then forwarded.*

*I have to be honest and say the lack of interest in actually enabling people to vote suggested to me that the motivation for the government of the day in making the changes was not primarily about enabling people to vote, but perhaps more about enabling a number of friends of the conservative Party who have lived abroad for more than 15 years to donate to the Conservatives.*

*At the moment there's a limit on how much a political party can spend in a general election, which is £20 million. There are plans to increase that limit, perhaps even double it. It's perfectly legal for someone to write a check for £20 million or £30 million or £40 million to one political party. To bring fairness to the system, I've been trying to work on reducing that limit and trying to say there should be a ban on donations above a certain level, say £10,000 or £50,000, which I think would clean up politics in the UK. When we talk about overseas voters, I'm cynical about the motives of the Conservatives at the moment."*

Stuart Coleman from Western Australia raised a question: *"I came to Australia when I was 20 and have now lived in Australia for 24 years. I never actually registered to vote in the UK, but I can prove that I've lived there. I've got a driver's licence and I've got bank statements. Would that be good enough?"*

Lord Rennard replied *"We're still waiting for the detailed regulations to ascertain exactly what will be required. So, we don't know. It's introduced through the Minister issuing what they call a Statutory Instrument. This is all secondary legislation, and the Statutory Instrument should list forms of ID, which an electoral registration officer can deem to be acceptable. But from what you say and what was announced in the debates by the minister, that will be entirely acceptable. And therefore, scanning in such a documentation should be okay."*

Mr. Coleman raised a supplementary question: *"You've been talking about overseas contributions. I've been a member of the Tory Party for virtually ever and I send my donation in at election time, but I didn't know there was a restriction. I send my donations in and they accept them."*

Lord Rennard replied *"When I said there's a ban on foreign donations, I think you're allowed to give £200 to a political party, but not above. If you're giving any more than that, the Conservative Party's actually in breach of election law.*

*I shouldn't query you about how much money you're giving, and certainly not to a rival political party, but I would advise that perhaps when you're in touch with them making your donation, you do say to them, that you need to ensure that this donation is in accordance with the Political Parties Elections*

*Referendum Act of 2000, which limits the amount anyone can give from overseas. But there is no limit domestically.”.*

Another member asked this question of Lord Rennard: “You mentioned in your speech about 100 or 150 constituencies that presumably are the swing constituencies.

*I used to live in Walthamstow in East London. Now, the Tories did win that once in 1987, but it was on a peculiar local issue. Generally, the Tories have zero chance of winning. I don't know how the Liberal Democrats do there. I haven't lived there for 30 years, but are you suggesting I shouldn't waste my time voting?”*

Lord Rennard responded: “When I was a politics undergraduate 40 odd years ago, the subject of first essay I wrote was “Are voter's rational”? Ever since I had to write that essay 40 years ago, I've still been wondering. Technically, in most constituencies, your vote doesn't count. Is it rational to even bother trying to participate? This is the problem with the first past the post system and is why I prefer the proportional representation system you have in Australia. You have a PR system for the Senate, but you use an alternative vote system for the House of Representatives. That I think would be an improvement if the UK changed to an alternative vote system. But we don't have that.

*All I was really suggesting for the purposes of this discussion is not that people don't participate at all, but where it's possible, if the last place you lived in happened to be one of the 100 and 150 marginals, you should try to register there and appoint proxies there.*

*In terms of your organisation and in support of your campaign to end frozen pensions issue, if BPIA were to spend a lot of time, effort and money trying to register people and appoint proxies in all seats, that will have less impact than if your efforts were directed at the marginals.*

*Whilst I say 100 and 150 seats that are marginals, we're having boundary organisation, sometimes called redistricting in the UK. At the moment the Boundary Commission has just published revised proposals that are still being consulted on for the next month or so and the final proposals will be announced by July 1st next year*

*They'll come into effect automatically without further parliamentary vote. So by July the first of the latest, we will know the new boundaries. Then there's the psephologists and people like me will be poring over the results of the local elections in these new constituencies and looking at results last time around and making calculations.*

*I've no doubt that all the media organisations will, as usual, publish their lists of the target seats or the marginal seats and where, for example, you've got Conservative MPs who think that they might lose their seats. A phrase I learnt many years ago in politics was nothing motivates a politician more than fear of losing their seat. So those Conservative MPs who fear they will be losing their seat are obvious targets. If they were aware that there were many*

*people from overseas with frozen pensions or with family and friends, living in their constituency, they might become more interested in the issue.*

*This is a particularly important point, I think, of the lobbying that you may have a limited number of people registered from overseas to vote, but if they still have family and friends in the UK whose votes will be determined on this issue, it makes a difference.*

*If I may turn just to another subject of lobbying and my experience of it. A few years ago, I was working with the League Against Cruel Sports in the 2017 general election who were seeking to oppose the abolition of the hunting ban.*

*Whatever you think of the issue, I was advising them how to make impact on the issue because the then Conservative prime minister, Theresa May, had said the Conservatives would scrap the hunting ban.*

*I helped work with the League Against Cruel Sports on polling, which showed the importance of the issue to people and how it would make a difference. Perhaps polling will not show up for you, but numbers of people might show up. What we then did was we targeted particular MPs and candidates on Twitter, so we got lots of people using the Twitter handle of the relevant MP, challenge them on whether or not they supported reversing the ban on hunting and overwhelmingly people opposed reversing the ban.*

*I don't know what the public level of support will be on your issue, but I would say that MPs follow their Twitter feeds and if there's a seat which you think is a marginal seat and the candidate of one party might want to win and the sitting MP might think they might lose.*

*Lots of people are raising this issue, as you found from the lobby in Westminster a little while ago. Many in campaigns are not aware of this. They simply don't know. They can't really believe it's the case that people pay attention to their Twitter feeds. It is important to target MPs and candidates on Twitter to make them aware."*

*Another question: "Do we know how much popular support there is in the UK for unfreezing pensions, having made it clear to people that it's not going to be backdated?"*

*Lord Rennard said "The last I looked at this was several years ago and I didn't see much support but I've personally not seen it tested.*

*There are always way to obtain a desired outcome with opinion polls in how you phrase the question. If you ask people, "Is it fair that some people in some countries have their pensions uprated whilst others didn't, and that if it wasn't backdated, wouldn't it be fair that people who'd made a contribution and who were UK citizens had their pensions uprated in line with inflation? Well, the question seems fair.*

*It's expensive doing an opinion poll on a particular issue. There are polling companies out there every week asking questions of samples of 500 or 1000 people. To add one or two questions to something which they're doing anyway, is actually relatively inexpensive. So that's something I'd talk*

*through with Tendo. I've used different polling companies. Some do things online, other people use different methods. If you get a proper polling company to do this on the basis that they have a really good sample, and they will let you word the question and it's not too obviously biased, you can perhaps get more of the responses which you want. If you get a helpful response, then in your lobbying of MPs, it matters.*

*Armed with these responses, an MP, can then lobby, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I agree with Patrick with what was saying that it's very much the Prime Minister and the Chancellor who will decide these things. More so than the Minister for the Department for Work and Pensions. But I often say to people when it comes to lobbying on an issue, you have to remember that whoever wins the election, the Treasury stays in power. The Treasury has got to think it's worth the political value of doing this.*

Mr. Edwards thanked Lord Rennard. He said Lord Rennard had made a wonderful presentation. Mr. Edwards said he had learned a lot, and I'm sure all our members are very grateful for your participation today.

Lord Rennard responded by saying: *"You're very welcome indeed. And I wish you luck with this campaign and very happy to keep in touch with you."*

Mr. Edwards thanked everyone else for participating.

## **Closing**

There being no other business the meeting closed at 6.30pm