



Aussies swept up in wave of hope

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Political Editor

AUSTRALIA is looking for a confidence surge to hit the American economy after the victory of Barack Obama.

The Federal Government believes the end of the prolonged election campaign will reduce uncertainty and encourage greater business activity — which, in turn, would boost economies around the world.

However, the Government will have to wait to see what policy changes come with Senator Obama's elevation, as incumbent George W. Bush will stay in the White House until January.

The first Australian political leader to directly test Washington for any early changes will be Treasurer Wayne Swan, who will arrive in the US next Monday.

Mr Swan today flies to Brazil for a meeting of the G20 finance ministers, the economic chiefs of the group of 20 top industrialised nations. He then flies to Washington for another meeting preparing for the November 15 summit of G20 leaders to be attended by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

It's not known whether Senator Obama will have any role in that summit, called to form united responses to the global financial crisis, or whether Mr Rudd will get to meet the President-elect.

There were many in Australia who shared the enthusiasm with Obama supporters holding parties across the city yesterday.

A function held by Democrats Abroad was awash with cheers, tears and a tsunami of text messages as expats took the day off and did what they could to celebrate history being made in their homeland 12,000km away.

Dual American-Australian Lindsay Gumley, 21, who voted in her first election, said the result would allow Americans embarrassed by the legacy of Mr Bush to regain some pride.

"I'm really excited because I have always been patriotic, but now I'm really happy because I can be proud to say I'm American," she said. "It's fantastic for people all over the world."

One certain consequence of the Obama triumph will be the departure of US Ambassador Robert McCallum who started service in Canberra in August 2006.

"It is not because of my close personal relationship with President Bush, it's because of my lack of a close personal relationship with Senator McCain or Senator Obama," Mr McCallum said.

The Government is understood to have been at ease at the possibility of either candidate gaining victory.

The apprehension is that the Democrats might push their new president towards being more protectionist at a time when the Australian view is that greater liberalisation is urgently needed.

Mr Rudd said Senator Obama's leadership was needed "above all" in dealing with the global financial crisis.



Proud to be American: US citizen Lindsay Gumley celebrates in Sydney yesterday

Picture: Craig Greenhill

What Obama stands for

ABORTION

Favours abortion rights

AFGHANISTAN

Would add about 7000 troops to the US force of 32,000, bringing the reinforcements from Iraq

DEATH PENALTY

Supports death penalty for crimes for which the "community is justified in expressing the full measure of its outrage"

ENERGY-GLOBAL WARMING

Supports 10-year, \$150 billion

fund for biofuels, wind, solar, plug-in hybrids, clean-coal technology and other "climate-friendly" measures. Mandatory reductions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 80 per cent from 1990 levels by 2050

FINANCIAL CRISIS

Two-year plan offering \$3000 tax credit to businesses for each new job created and enabling people to withdraw up to 15 per cent of their retirement money,

to a maximum of \$10,000, without penalty, except for the usual taxes

GAY MARRIAGE

Opposes constitutional amendment to ban it. Supports civil unions, says states should decide about marriage

GUANTANAMO BAY PRISON

Says Guantanamo should be closed and detainees allowed to challenge their detention

IRAQ

Says his plan would complete withdrawal of US combat troops in 16 months

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Supports relaxing federal restrictions on financing of embryonic stem cell research

TRADE

Reopen North American Free Trade Agreement to strengthen enforcement of labour and environmental standards