

The Hon. Mr. Tony Smith, MP,
Chair Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
ACT 2600

Dear Mr. Smith,

Re Joint Standing Committee into Electoral Matters Enquiry into the conduct of the 2013 Federal Elections .

I wish to express concern about a number of points that may have or could influence both the previous 2013 Federal Elections in WA and Future elections in this State and in Australia.

1. Identification-

Lack of requirement of poses an immediate problem of who actually votes and gives rise to the potential of someone voting several times in other's names eg those who are not familiar with the Australian electoral system may agree to have some one else vote for them, particularly a person with power or influence over this other person or persons. There is the potential for minority group members to be intimidated or influenced, as they are particularly vulnerable due to limited education, background and cultural influence.

Solution An Elector must produce personal ID when completing a form. Signed forms admitted by another party should be rejected.

2. Postal Votes.

In the City of Swan, WA, at the Local Government Election several years ago, I was informed that the Mayor had been collecting election papers from his electorate (I understand from people of Calabrian or similar background) to deliver on their behalf. This would immediately raise issues of the potential of influence on the recipient who may not have completed their papers prior to his arrival. The complaint to the Electoral Office, was, I understand, rejected. However, this is another further area of possible political intervention. I do not think postal voting is acceptable.

Solution The votes should be taken to a particular source eg Post Office or Regional Electoral Office and the electors ID viewed and confirmed prior to acceptance of the vote.

3. Minority groups and the Infirm and Aged.

I understand that in Local Government elections, people visit nursing homes to assist the elderly with votes and that these votes can form a substantial percentage of the total votes cast.

Solution There needs to be a formal arrangement with nursing homes, and only those deemed capable, have the right to vote. Voting should be unaided or assisted by a registered Electoral Officer, if vision or lack of mobility are an issue. Voting whilst a right, should have 'understanding' assessed in some way (as per driving licence at a certain age.)

4. Selection of Electoral Officers.

Electoral officers are often active members of a political party and there is potential for a conflict of interests to arise whereby that person may direct or assist an elector in a way that could influence their own interest.

Solution No electoral Officer should hold membership with a political party. This is one way of reducing possible perceived conflicts of interest.

5. Political Observers

The Standing committee must review all stages of the Electoral process. As a student and Electoral Officer many years ago, I was amazed at the access political party 'Observers' had to papers when I was counting votes.

Solution I believe the 'Observers' should have been seated at the end of the room and not walking around making distracting comments. I felt they could move far too close to the electoral papers and would sometimes pick up a paper to challenge a scored notation or validity of a vote. Perhaps the system has changed in the last 40 years and these 'Observers' are no longer able to handle papers.

6. Accountability and Selection of Electoral Officers, Transport Staff and other Staff.

There is a need to try and ensure that no one taking part in this process has strong (eg membership) affiliations with a political party.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment on our important constitutional and democratic process of political voting.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Barbara Dundas