

Robyn & David Kemp  
P.O. Box 799  
Maryborough Qld 4650

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Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

We wish to make a submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into 2019 Federal Election chaired by Senator James McGrath.

1. Pre-polling – The length pre-polling is much too long. We feel that 1 week is sufficient. It appears that within each electorate cities with an AEC office have 3 weeks of pre-polling while other cities/towns in that electorate only have 2 weeks of pre-polling. This causes confusion for voters and in our opinion is a waste of AEC resources.
2. Number pre-polling sites in each electorate – Some cities/towns in an electorate have more than one pre-poll site e.g. Hervey Bay (which is in the Hinkler electorate) had 2 sites, and the whole Hinkler electorate overall had 7 sites. We feel that one central location in each city/town with a pre-poll booth would be sufficient. (i.e. Hervey Bay should have only had 1 pre-polling station)
3. Public Holiday pre-poll voting – At the 2019 Federal election the Labor Day public holiday occurred during the pre-polling period in Queensland, but not in other states. Pre-polling venues across Queensland were open on this public holiday day and very few voters attended. We consider this is a waste of taxpayer's money due to penalty rates having to be paid to AEC staff of this day.
4. Pre-polling extended hours on some days – On 2 Wednesdays & 1 Friday pre-polling finished at 6pm instead of 5pm – During this last hour no voters came during this hour. Anecdotally we understand that some Hervey Bay polling booths stayed open until 8pm and we understand that there were very few voters attending during this period from 5 – 8pm.
5. Saturday pre-polling – The pre-polling centres were open on the Saturday of the week before election day. There were only a minimal number of people who voted on this day and of these the majority occurred in the morning. We therefore recommend that it either be scrapped or held in the morning only
6. Allowable reasons for pre-polling – Pre-polling is advertised for people who have a legitimate reason why they cannot vote on election day. At the 2019 federal election something like one-quarter (1/4) of all voters voted before the actual election day. Speaking to many voters as they went in to vote they were clearly saying that they were wanting to get it over and done with early, implying that they did not have a legitimate reason as to why they could not vote on election day. The AEC needs to be stricter with asking people to

- ensure they have a valid reason for voting early and turning away those who do not have a valid reason.
7. Suitability of building used in Maryborough Queensland – The AEC needs to ensure that the buildings used for pre-poll voting are disability friendly. The building used in Maryborough, 150 Bazaar Street Maryborough, was difficult for people with a disability to access, voters had to navigate 2 ramps to get to electoral officials. The door at the top of the first ramp at the front door was almost not wide enough to allow a wheelchair to enter. This ramp also proved to be a safety hazard for people in wheelchairs – we know of 2 people (and witnessed one fall) who fell out of their wheelchairs because the front wheels became stuck in a dip at the bottom of this ramp.
  8. Building Suitability – 6 metre embargoed area - Another issue with the building in Maryborough Queensland was the 6-metre ruling for handing out ‘How To Vote’ cards requiring people who are wearing political party identification to walk on the roadway, outside parked cars, to move from one side of the building to the other. This is a safety issue in that people could have been hit by cars whilst doing this.
  9. Disability Parking - The building used by the AEC in Maryborough Queensland had no disability parking outside it. The AEC officials had suitable parking cones but did not use them at all. We observed a number of elderly people struggling to find a place to park and then get themselves into this pre-polling station.
  10. Availability of ballot papers in early stages of pre-poll – In Maryborough Queensland AEC officials were overwhelmed by the number of people voting at the start of the first day – this led to ballot paper printing issues meaning that people had to wait for an extended period of time to get their ballot papers.
  11. Size of Senate ballot papers – The senate ballot papers need to be reviewed as they are far too long to be easily handled both in the voting cubicle and also for AEC staff. A more standard size sheet of paper would lead to cost efficiencies for taxpayers.
  12. Instructions for completing Senate ballot papers confusing – The 2 different ways of completing the Senate ballot papers (i.e. one way for above the line and another for below the line) led to confusion for voters. This confusion was not only with the senate voting papers but with how people had to mark their House of Reps ballot papers. For example, on the senate paper voters were required number 6 candidate above the line or 12 candidates below the line, consequently numerous people thought they only had to mark 6 boxes on the House of Reps ballot paper also. In electorates with more than 7 candidates for the House of Reps because these voters did not number all the boxes their votes became informal. There should be some form of standardisation of the instructions for how to fill out the voting form for the House of Reps and the Senate.
  13. How to Vote cards – An increasingly significant number of people are refusing to take ‘How To Vote’ cards as they appear to be obtaining this type of information from their smart phones. Accordingly, this led to a large number of ‘How To Vote Cards’ being destroyed leading to unnecessary expense and litter. One solution would be to set up a board in each ballot cubicle with one ‘How To Vote’ card for each candidate.
  14. Recycling of How To Vote cards - One way to reduce physical wastage and litter associated with ‘How To Vote’ cards would be to recycle them by allowing them to be retrieved from inside polling stations and returned to the relevant political party personnel outside the building.
  15. Voter Identification – Voters are currently not required to produce any type of identification when they present to the AEC officials to obtain their ballot papers. In Queensland State and Local Government elections voters are mailed out a voting entitlement card which the

majority of voters take with them and present to the polling officials at the polling booth. We recommend that some simple form of identification, preferably photographic, be used in future federal elections to avoid any issues of people voting multiple times. Would not recommend the Queensland electoral commission system of sending out specific voting entitlement cards due to the high cost of postage for this to be done, considering that voters already have photographic identification via driver's licences, passports, 18+ cards.

16. Votes declared invalid at Tinana Queensland Polling Booth – At the Tinana Queensland Polling Booth four (4) votes were declared invalid, even though they were correctly completed, because the issuing officer had not initialled them before handing them to the respective voters. Whilst scrutineering this count we raised an objection with the returning officer, and he refused to accept our challenge that these votes were valid and placed them in the informal pile. Our view is that these votes were formal votes and should have been included in the count as it was and AEC issuing officer's failing which caused these votes to be wasted.

Yours faithfully,

David Kemp

Robyn Kemp