

## **Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2025 Election**

**Submitted by:** [REDACTED] Electoral Reform Group

**Date:** 10 October 2025

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### **Executive Summary**

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's review of the 2025 federal election. This submission is made on behalf of [REDACTED] Volunteers who were dedicated to supporting the [REDACTED] candidate in her bid for [REDACTED] the seat of Goldstein in 2025. Many of these volunteers also worked on her 2022 campaign and share her commitment to action on climate change, equality, and integrity, including promoting transparent and fair electoral processes.

This submission addresses the increase in incidents of aggressive conduct in the 2025 election and potential reforms of safety and security measures as per the terms of reference. It provides an overview of some of the tactics used and incidents that occurred during the early campaign, pre-poll, polling day and post poll scrutineering, with quotes from [REDACTED]'s volunteers. A survey of volunteers was disseminated to collect stories and recommendations from their work on the election campaign to help inform this report. The quotes from volunteers are taken from some of the 43 responses received. Other information in the report stems from our own experiences/observations as active [REDACTED] volunteers and from discussions with staff and other volunteers.

### **Key Concerns:**

- Intimidation including doxxing, stalking, and threats
- Coordinated third-party interference by proxy groups
- Political advertisements that are deceptive and misleading
- Potential Postal Vote manipulation
- Intimidation of scrutineers

### **Critical reforms required:**

- Truth in political advertising legislation with an independent authority to monitor compliance.
- A complete ban on third-party proxy groups from campaigning at polling booths, with criminal penalties and no third-party proxy group advertising material within 500 metres of voting centres.
- Limits on the number of volunteers and corflutes for each candidate at polling booths.
- Enhanced AEC enforcement powers with rapid response to issues arising at centres. AEC staff to have authority to respond to issues occurring beyond 6 metres from the polling centres.
- Postal vote reform with exclusive AEC control of the postal vote process.
- Thorough briefing of scrutineers on procedures and behaviour to occur every day counting is undertaken to ensure new scrutineers are properly informed of expectations.
- A complete ban on candidates entering scrutineering premises or hovering in close vicinity.

### **1. Election Campaign Tactics:**

The campaign against [REDACTED], her staff and volunteers leading up to and during the election was hostile and threatening and in the words of [REDACTED] 'undermined both the fairness and safety of the election process' [REDACTED].

- During the election campaign [REDACTED] received assault and death threats, was chased in the street, verbally abused, had her car number plate photographed and placed on social media, and members of her family were trolled on-line.
- Some electorate office staff were harassed at festivals and getting in and out of their vehicles by individuals known to be aligned with the [REDACTED] Party.
- The level of concern for office staff was such that the Australian Federal Police were asked to come and give staff and office volunteers a safety briefing. During this briefing the AFP staff members stated they had worked on election campaigns previously but had never seen the level of harassment occurring in Goldstein and Kooyong in the 2025 campaign. They warned [REDACTED]'s staff and office volunteers to park well away from her [REDACTED] office, to not [REDACTED] wear t-shirts to the office, and to always go out in groups of three or four while the campaign was on.
- In addition, several experienced volunteers were approached to form a security team for [REDACTED] at polling booths named the 'Sunshine Squad'. Their task was to mediate any disputes between [REDACTED] volunteers and other people if they occurred and to alert the AFP or the local police if there was any perceived risk to the [REDACTED]'s safety. The need for such a squad was both concerning and exasperating.
- Some constituents were harassed for having corflutes picturing the [REDACTED] on their fence and told they were making the neighbourhood unsafe.
- There were letters distributed to some supporters' letterboxes accusing them of being '*antisemitic, just like [REDACTED], the [REDACTED]. You are no longer welcome in this neighbourhood.*' [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## 2. Systematic Intimidation

- The [REDACTED] Party and third-party proxy groups, **Repeal the Teal** (headed by a former [REDACTED] party member), **Advance, Better Australia** and **Australians for Prosperity** (headed by a former [REDACTED] MP), had leaflets distributed in letterboxes and/or ran attack ads spreading dis- and misinformation about [REDACTED]'s voting record and her stance on policy issues. It was distressing for volunteers and confusing for constituents.
- Office volunteers received phone calls from some constituents perplexed or furious about policy positions [REDACTED] had never adopted or about false statistics on her [REDACTED] voting record.
- The federal [REDACTED] Party handed over sensitive voter information to the Exclusive Brethren as part of a mammoth phone campaign in which members of the secretive Christian religious sect made nearly a million calls to voters on behalf of the [REDACTED] in the run-up to the federal election.  
[REDACTED]
- A misleading letter was sent by the Victorian Catholic Education Authority to parents whose children were attending some Catholic schools in Goldstein just a few days prior to the election. It stated that [REDACTED] had not confirmed support for the current level of funding for Catholic schools and parents should vote for candidates that had. **This was false.** Her office had responded to a query about this issue on 23/4/25 confirming her support. Office volunteers and staff learnt about the letters when parents at the local Catholic primary school, rang the office despairing that the Archdiocese was trying to influence their votes. The Age newspaper noted the Chief of Staff of the

Victorian Catholic Education Authority, the organisation that wrote to school parents in Goldstein, previously worked as Chief of Staff to the [REDACTED] candidate.

- The third-party proxy group Repeal the Teal was established in February 2025 allegedly in response to a letter from the crossbench to the government supporting the reinstatement of UNRWA funding for Gaza. This is explained in an Australian Jewish Association video with the title **‘Does My [REDACTED] Support Terror?’ [REDACTED]**. The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] involved, signed the letter out of concern for the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza and there being no other way to get food and water to Gazan citizens at that time. [REDACTED] had consistently been a strong supporter of the Jewish community, particularly in response to the terrible events of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, yet this was ignored.
- Despite [REDACTED] Party supporters filming or recording nearly every community meeting that [REDACTED] spoke at during her [REDACTED] and becoming very familiar with her policy stance on a broad range of issues, the [REDACTED] candidate only attended one of several pre-election debates held in Goldstein. It was organised by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. His approach to campaigning appeared to involve providing little detailed information about his own or his party’s policy agenda, and relying on third party proxy groups, to spread as much dis- and misinformation about the [REDACTED] candidate as possible.

**Truth in political advertising was the major issue of concern for respondents to our volunteer survey.** Representative comments from survey respondents are below:

- *“The misleading and half-truth ‘advertising’ at the most recent federal election was abhorrent and reliant on misinformation. A drive along the Nepean Hwy was awful.”*
- *“By using proxies - had the possible effect of making it appear that there were many organisations who were of the same view (as the [REDACTED] party), and effectively bypassing the requirement for the party to “authorise” any advert.”*
- *“Allowing the distortion of the truth for political attack advertising is detrimental to the process. Removing this from election material does everyone a service but especially it ensures that the VOTER has correct information about candidates.”*
- *“The main cause of lying and general disinformation is the lack of accountability in an environment where winning at any cost is being encouraged.”*
- *“Current laws belong to a bygone era. They do not take adequate account of the Internet, social media, or the rise of proxy groups (often with direct foreign links and therefore potentially constituting foreign interference in the Australian electoral process).”*
- *“The degree and depth of misinformation in my electorate was staggering.”*

### 3. Pre-Polling Tactics

- In Repeal the Teal advertising material encouraging people to attend campaign training it was stated, ***'We're mobilising an army – and we need YOU on the frontline'*** and it felt like an army had arrived on pre-polling days. [REDACTED]
- As [REDACTED] volunteers who were there to give out how to vote cards and engage politely with voters, we were shouted down and shut out by the army of Repeal the Teal volunteers campaigning in concert with [REDACTED] volunteers.
- Repeal the Teal volunteers appeared to have no respect for democratic traditions, fairness or for the voters. They pushed some [REDACTED] volunteers out of the way getting as close to the polling booth entry as allowed and repeatedly yelling over and over ***'Put [REDACTED] Last'***. Others walked along the voting queue, standing right next to voters giving them no personal space' asking if they were Jewish and whispering disinformation about [REDACTED]'s attitude to the Jewish community, labelling her as 'just another [REDACTED]' and providing false statistics on her voting record.
- While doing this, both the Repeal the Teal and [REDACTED] volunteers thrust fliers containing dis- and/or misinformation about [REDACTED]'s record and achievements into the hands of voters, many of whom looked perplexed, frustrated, or angry with the noise and sea of volunteers and corflutes they had to negotiate to get through to the polling booth.
- The number of corflutes (including third-party corflutes) and volunteers at pre-poll and on election day was excessive, creating a very stressful and chaotic atmosphere.
- There were reports of [REDACTED] volunteers being abused and being photographed or filmed. Two young volunteers were called *'little scum'* and reduced to tears. Another was spat on and called *'a [REDACTED] idiot'*. Some volunteers cancelled shifts or left shifts because of intimidation.
- Some Jewish [REDACTED] volunteers at the polling booths were called *'antisemites'* and *'self-hating Jews'*.
- [REDACTED] Party and Repeal the Teal volunteers were observed switching between Repeal the Teal and [REDACTED] Party t-shirts multiple times at polling booths. (See Appendix 2 - Photo)
- Reports made to the AEC by [REDACTED]'s booth captain at the Brighton pre-polling booth were fruitless. The response was that they had no responsibility for managing anything that went on beyond 6 metres from the polling booth.
- On the final day of pre-polling, far right agitators turned up at Brighton and Hampton polling booths with a sign ***'National Workers Alliance'***. They stayed for approximately one hour at each place, setting up flags, speakers and making false claims about candidates, scaring voters and volunteers. The AEC and Victoria Police had no authority to get them to leave. One volunteer reported *'some voters were visibly distressed and crying'* while the Alliance leader was yelling about immigration and crime. (see Appendix 3-photo)

Our volunteers were shocked and dismayed by the tactics. We had all been briefed to never engage in an argument, to smile and always be positive but we were being drowned out, pushed, and sidelined by the tactics of a highly aggressive third-party proxy group and [REDACTED] volunteers. The tactics were clearly designed to suppress our participation, and a marked contrast from the overall behaviour at the 2022 election.

In the survey feedback from [REDACTED] Volunteers the aggressive third-party campaigning was the second major issue of concern.

Representative comments from survey respondents are below:

- *'As a [REDACTED] volunteer at Brighton pre-poll I was screamed at for being an 'antiSemite/childkiller & mass murderer'. I would recommend security/police be present to protect volunteers or AEC staff to have authority to manage this kind of behaviour. Including CCTV.'*
- *'I was volunteering at the polling booth and Repeal the Teal volunteers literally screamed "Put [REDACTED] last" at every voter who passed by. It was very aggressive, and I felt intimidated for me and for the voters.'*
- *'I manned a polling booth for 10 hours on polling day and door knocked on a number of days and helped on pre-polling days. I have been involved in politics for over 6 decades and I have never seen such poor behaviour at a polling booth. The supporters of the [REDACTED] candidate intimidated voters and screamed at them as they ran what was a gauntlet to enter the polling booth gates. There was no control by the AEC officials to prevent this harassment. I was personally abused and spat at for 'being a Hamas supporter'. To mitigate or stop this behaviour the AEC needs to have staff members at entrances to monitor the action of supporters and volunteers, with the authority to call for police or security to stop this behaviour that threatens safety.'*
- *'The Brighton Pre-Poll booth in the Goldstein electorate was the site of significant activity by proxy and activist groups. At times the number of people representing these groups outnumbered those representing the candidates. They behaved in an aggressive way towards the volunteers representing the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] candidates. **The behaviour included live streaming to social media while accusing the volunteers of, for example, being anti-Semitic and filming the vehicles of volunteers and posting their number plates online.** The goal seemed to be to intimidate the volunteers into leaving the booth. Proxy and activist groups also festooned the Pre-Poll booth area for up to 50m in each direction with signs fastened in trees, A-frame signs, and plastic bunting with disinformation about the [REDACTED] candidate.'*
- *'Many extremely rude, vicious, threatening comments were made about [REDACTED] at the booths, and in the campaign, that were in my opinion examples of gender-based violence. It was never called out by the [REDACTED] leadership.'*
- *There were far too many signs and volunteers at polling booths including pre-poll."*
- *"... only standing candidates should be allowed to have representation at polling places".*
- *"There was aggressive campaigning which I did find hurtful, intimidating and frequent use of lies. Overwhelming use of Corflutes added to the intimidation. I suggest campaign material should be truthful. All campaigners should act respectfully to each other and voters. Limit the number of corflutes on site to a reasonable number e.g., 6 at most. Limit the number of people campaigning at polling booths at any one time. Maintaining distancing."*

#### 4. Postal Voting System

- The [REDACTED] candidate received a disproportionate 60% share of postal votes (with preferences) in Goldstein, that is, a significantly larger proportion of the votes received through pre poll and on polling day. There is concern that there may have been some degree of systematic manipulation involved.
- The ABC reported it had seen several texts sent to voters from [REDACTED] candidates that encouraged them to apply for a postal vote with an accompanying video of the candidate and their election pitch. The texts also contained a link to the party's postal vote websites.  
[REDACTED]
- In the same article there is a quote from the AEC Commissioner stating that unsolicited messages about postal vote applications was the number one complaint voters raised at every federal poll.
- In [REDACTED]'s electoral office all queries regarding postal vote applications were referred to the AEC. Constituents could apply online or phone the AEC for a postal vote application form.
- This needs to be the practice adopted by all candidates. It is noted that this was recommended by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters after the 2022 election inquiry, but no change was adopted. The current system involves hood-winking voters and lacks integrity. Change must be instituted this term.

Many [REDACTED] Volunteers have expressed concern about the current postal voting system and the potential for manipulation. The comments below from two of our volunteers encapsulate those concerns:

- *"Tighten Postal Voting rules. Data harvesting from parties and aligned groups by including a reply paid envelope which is addressed to them, not the AEC, should not be legal."*
- *"The mailing of postal vote forms with advertising from the [REDACTED] candidate's campaign was confusing. The address on the postage paid envelope did not indicate it would go to AEC. I rang them to check- who would receive my form? Was it [REDACTED] associates? Would they access my data & could they use it for their campaign before forwarding? All the AEC person could say was 'it is legal' without telling me who the immediate recipient of my postal vote would have been. I still do not know. This is surely a risk for election interference & undue influence if the combination of a formal vote & the [REDACTED] candidate's campaign was mistaken for endorsement. This loophole must surely be closed asap. No postal votes should be accompanied by political advertising nor be handled by a candidate's team. They should go straight to the AEC."*

#### 5. Scrutineering

- [REDACTED] Scrutineers have reported incidents of intimidation, harassment and obstruction while viewing ballot papers and that some [REDACTED] scrutineers appeared not to have familiarised themselves with the rules and guidelines. They felt the AEC needed more authority to address these issues.
- The [REDACTED] candidate turned up at the AEC facility without signing in and crossed the taped off area into the break room while counting was in progress. The candidate spoke to [REDACTED] Party Volunteers in the break room and handed over 'snacks for them' before being told to leave by officials after [REDACTED] Scrutineers brought his presence to AEC officials' attention.

## 6. [REDACTED] MP's address

On 28 August 2025, the [REDACTED] delivered a scathing address in the Federation Chamber highlighting the "shameful and abhorrent" conduct witnessed in Goldstein during the election.

[REDACTED]' speech validates the experiences documented by Goldstein volunteers. His detailed account included the following comments:

- **Systematic Intimidation of Volunteers:** [REDACTED] recounted "repeated incidents of verbal abuse of young volunteers, including calling them 'little scum,' reducing them to tears through aggressive adult confrontation designed to suppress participation."
- **Threats and Violence:** He detailed "threats of extreme violence and death threats against figures like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], requiring Australian Federal Police protection and private security to protect against vandalism and intimidation."
- **Leadership Failure:** [REDACTED] criticised "[REDACTED]'s failure to condemn these tactics, instead making excuses such as attributing his volunteer's aggression to 'low blood sugar' rather than taking responsibility for the toxic environment his campaign created."
- **Personal Impact on Democratic Participants:** He highlighted "the harassment that made [REDACTED] fear being followed home, demonstrating the personal toll of systematic intimidation on those who dare to participate in democratic processes."
- **Post-Election Misconduct:** [REDACTED] noted that "[REDACTED]'s team allegedly used 'standover tactics' during scrutineering, extending the intimidation beyond the campaign period."
- **Institutional Abuse:** He condemned "a vexatious National Anti-Corruption Commission referral against [REDACTED] by [REDACTED], which [REDACTED] called a 'reckless attempt to misuse the commission for political advantage'—a claim the NACC dismissed as groundless."
- **Praise for Democratic Integrity:** Notably, [REDACTED] praised [REDACTED]'s integrity, noting she ran on "ideas and values" despite facing misogynistic slurs, stalking, and requiring AFP protection. He tied this to broader democratic threats, warning that such hostility deters participation and undermines institutions.

We are grateful to [REDACTED] for acknowledging and speaking out about the tactics employed in the Goldstein 2025 election campaign to defeat the [REDACTED] candidate. As previously stated, it became more and more apparent as the election came closer, the tactics were designed to scare and intimidate [REDACTED], her staff and volunteers from campaigning and to confuse the voters with dis- and misinformation.

## 7. Australian Democracy Deserves Better.

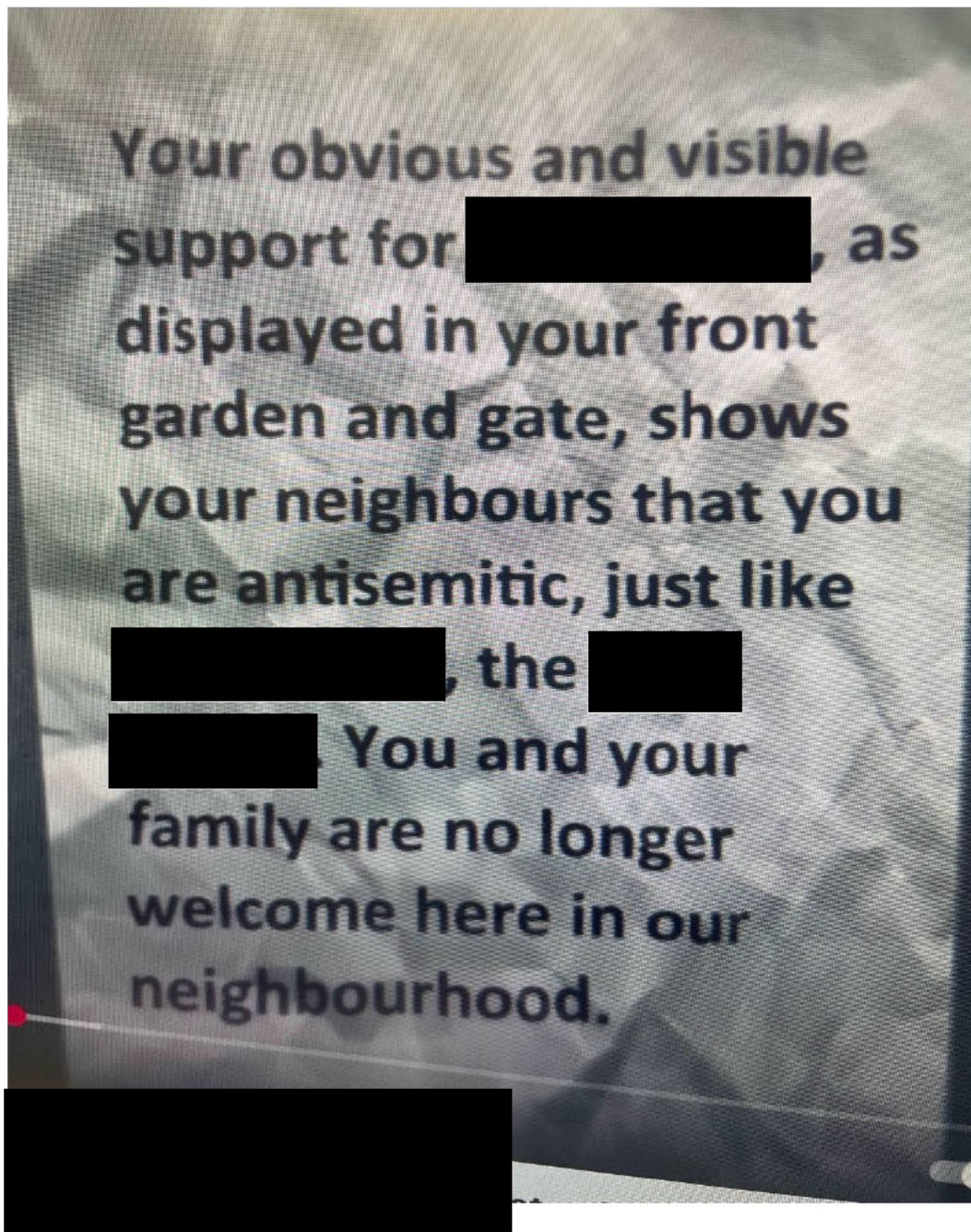
What happened in Goldstein is a warning. Critical reforms are needed to ensure the Goldstein playbook does not spread nationwide, transforming Australian elections into intimidation-based contests where disinformation and misinformation dominate.

### Critical Reforms Needed:

- Truth in political advertising legislation with an independent authority to monitor compliance.
- A complete ban on third-party proxy groups campaigning at polling booths with criminal penalties and no third-party proxy group advertising material within 500 metres of voting centres.
- Limits on the number of volunteers and confutes for each candidate at polling booths.

- Enhanced AEC enforcement powers with rapid response to issues arising at centres. AEC staff to have authority to respond to issues occurring beyond 6 metres from the polling centres.
- Postal vote reform with exclusive AEC control of the postal vote process.
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Appendix 1



## Appendix 2



Prominent volunteers were switching between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Party t shirts for different pre polling shifts. [REDACTED]

### Appendix 3



National Workers Alliance