

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Dear Secretary

I would like to make comment on Section 220 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* 1918 which looks at opening and closing hours of polling booths on Election Day and the commencement of counting of votes.

- I would like the Joint Committee to look into ways of counting all votes around Australia at the same time in real terms. None of the delays associated with time zones.

Often the results of the Election are called before the booths in WA close, although this was not the case in the 2019 Election which was unusually close. This must usually make WA feel somewhat redundant.

- With compulsory voting, all voters should feel their vote counts equally towards the final result from the moment counting of votes commences.

There are 2 options that I have thought of but there may be others. Both would require an amendment to Section 220.

Option 1: Different closing hours in various States/Territories

Could Western Australia only vote between 8am and 3pm (their time) so that their voting centres close at the same time at the Eastern Seaboard? Same with South Australia and the Northern Territory - close at 5.30pm (their time). Voting would commence as usual at 6pm Eastern Standard Time.

Option 2: Standardised early closing hours around Australia

Could all booths around Australia close at 3pm instead of 6pm? Counting of votes would commence as usual at 6pm Eastern Standard Time. In the eastern states and in SA and NT the votes would need to be held securely until 6pm AEST ie there is a 3-hour delay in counting of votes taking place whilst the eastern seaboard waits until WA closes.

- WA, SA and NT would be able to participate in the results in the same real time as the eastern seaboard and would feel that their votes count just as much.

Television and Radio:

There would still be the same television and radio opportunities at 6pm and the same excitement, it would just mean that votes in WA, SA and NT would be counted at the same time as those on the eastern seaboard.