

Submission to The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Enquiry into the 2025 Federal Election

I was a volunteer in the [REDACTED] candidate's campaign for election as the [REDACTED] in both 2022 and 2025.

My submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2025 federal election stems from my personal experiences and observations of the questionable tactics employed by the Goldstein [REDACTED] party candidate, his supporters, and by third-party proxy groups supporting him.

Brief summary of concerns related to my personal experiences and observations

1. Personal abuse from neighbours for supporting the [REDACTED] candidate for Goldstein
2. Inappropriate behaviours by supporters of the [REDACTED] party at a campaign event
3. Undemocratic and unacceptable behaviours at the pre-polling booth
4. Untruthful and misleading political advertising in support of the [REDACTED] party candidate, as well as postal vote applications and included materials from the [REDACTED] party
5. Disturbed that the Jewish Community Council of Victoria had to distribute a newsletter about inappropriate behaviours by, and towards, members of the Jewish community
6. Online post-election personal vilification directed at me by a [REDACTED] party supporter

Summary of suggestions for change in electoral processes:

1. Political advertising: all should be authorised, and authorisers held accountable
2. Postal vote applications, and hospital/aged care voting processes: only to be conducted by AEC
3. Pre-poll, polling day, and polling station matters: no third-party proxies allowed; limitations on (official) volunteers and signage; police presence
4. Political commentary: mis-/disinformation be banned; hate speech legislation applied as appropriate

Personal experiences and observations

1. During the 2022 Federal election campaign, I erected a corflute in support of the [REDACTED] Goldstein candidate in my front garden. I was abused by a neighbour who stopped her car in front of my home and screeched and shouted at me that I was a traitor to the Jewish community for supporting "the anti-Semite".

In 2025, knowing that many in the Jewish Community were traumatised by the ongoing Israel/Gaza conflict and by the rise of antisemitic incidents in Melbourne (including in the electorate of Goldstein), I decided not to erect a corflute supporting the [REDACTED] candidate in the front of my home. I did not want to provoke a repeat of my 2022 experience with my neighbours, and was also a little fearful that I might be targeted in some way by them or by others if I did. It is outrageous that I should have felt this way in what has been, until recently, a civilised, tolerant, Australian democracy.

2. During the 2025 election campaign, I attended an event organised by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) that was held at the Brighton Hebrew Congregation. This was the only event in Goldstein that the [REDACTED] Party candidate had agreed to share a platform with the [REDACTED] candidate.

I was shocked by the disrespectful behaviour of the [REDACTED] Party candidate's supporters in attendance, the [REDACTED] Party candidate himself, and the moderators of the event.

Some [REDACTED] Party candidate supporters booed loudly at the opening of the event as the President of the JCCV conducted an acknowledgment of country. Following this, one of the two moderators described how the forum/debate would proceed. He said that the same questions would be put to both candidates, that civility was expected from the candidates and from the audience, and that agitators would be warned once and then ejected from the venue. As questions were put to the [REDACTED] candidate, the [REDACTED] Party candidate's supporters heckled, hissed, and booed, drowning out the [REDACTED] candidate. Neither of the two moderators nor the [REDACTED] Party candidate himself called the disruptors to order; the [REDACTED] candidate had to ask the audience to allow her to complete her response. I noted that the [REDACTED] candidate was asked each question first; this allowed the [REDACTED] Party candidate to rebut the [REDACTED] candidates' responses, as well as to put his own views forward. Needless to say, the moderators did not abide by their own stated rules about warnings and ejections. In my view, the moderators did not conduct or handle the forum impartially.

I also noticed that outside the venue, third-party proxy supporters of the [REDACTED] Party candidate were thrusting leaflets at audience members as they entered and as they left.

3. For both the 2022 and 2025 election campaigns, I was a volunteer during the pre-polling period, and was stationed at the Brighton (St. Stephen's Church) pre-polling booth.

During the 2022 pre-poll period, the election in which the [REDACTED] Party candidate had assumed he would retain the seat of Goldstein, I witnessed the [REDACTED] Party candidate rudely admonish voters who would not take a "How to Vote" card from him. But that was a minor example of disrespect compared to what took place in 2025.

The general atmosphere at the pre-polling booth was quite different in 2025. Surrounded by an overabundance of signage stretching the length of the block to the polling station, and by overwhelming numbers of the [REDACTED] Party candidate's volunteers and third-party proxy group supporters moving up and down the queues of voters pushing "How to Vote" cards at them, there was an air of hostility, and the area felt unsafe. Some [REDACTED] candidate's volunteers, I was told, had been abused by some [REDACTED] Party candidate supporters and by some voters. Some members of the third-party proxy groups supporting the [REDACTED] Party candidate were overheard by other [REDACTED] candidate volunteers urging voters to put the [REDACTED] candidate last, calling her an anti-Semite, or labelling her with other untruthful and unsavoury politically-laden terms (e.g., [REDACTED] Commie, terrorist).

4. I was concerned about the contents of letterboxed leaflets that I received, by others that I saw but were not delivered to my home, by local [REDACTED] party political advertising, and by [REDACTED] party sponsored postal vote applications.

The electorate was bombarded with letterboxed leaflets from the [REDACTED] party and third-party proxy groups supporting the [REDACTED] party candidate; some of the latter were not officially authorised. The contents of many of the leaflets were replete with misleading and/or totally fabricated messaging about the [REDACTED] candidate, for example, her parliamentary voting record was manipulated, and policy positions attributed to her were fabricated. On some material, state issues were conflated with

Federal issues, a practice that the now [REDACTED] party MP continues - see the image below that was recently posted on his official Facebook page. It shows Victorian issues attributed to the [REDACTED], and possibly misrepresents The Age newspaper. [Similar AI-generated memes are commonly shared on social media.]



During the election campaign period (and before), advertising on public electronic billboards in Goldstein (e.g., along Nepean Highway) carried similar misleading and/or fabricated negative messaging about the [REDACTED] candidate.

While it remains legal to do so, the [REDACTED] party's letterboxed postal vote application forms were accompanied by [REDACTED] party advertising. The reply-paid envelopes for mailing requests for postal vote applications were addressed to [REDACTED] party headquarters in Victoria. While I have no supporting evidence, I see the potential for voter manipulation in this allowed practice. Who knows whether or not the [REDACTED] party harvested data from returned postal vote applications and, if this happened, how the information was used. In Goldstein, only the [REDACTED] party letterboxed postal vote application forms; I assume other parties do the same in other electorates. The potential for voter manipulation is unacceptable and should not be allowed.

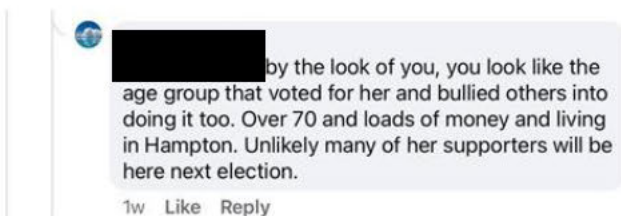
5. During the 2025 election campaign, the JCCV put out a newsletter in which unacceptable behaviours towards, and by, members of the Jewish Community were highlighted.



The JCCV and those who reported what they had experienced or observed in Goldstein are to be applauded for what they did. The extent of any change of behaviour that may have resulted from this positive step taken by the JCCV is unknown to me.

6. After the election, following the partial re-count for the seat of Goldstein, the successful [REDACTED] party candidate posted about his victory on his official Facebook (FB) page. A discussion began about the margin by which the [REDACTED] party candidate had won the seat. One commentator focussed on the first preference margin, exaggerating the win by the [REDACTED] party candidate by disregarding the actual final very small winning margin following preference distribution. I weighed in. A sequence of exchanges followed in which I tried to clarify the preferential system that is used in Australia. One of the FB commenters then began mocking and vilifying me and the [REDACTED] candidate and her supporters. I've extracted the pertinent comments (see below). [I have deleted *names*. However, I'm certain that the 'person' addressing me was a troll, or someone using a pseudonym as there was no FB profile.]

i)



ii)



iii)



The third comment provides evidence of the incessant, offensive, and derogatory name-calling endured by Goldstein's [REDACTED] candidate from [REDACTED] party supporters before, during, and after the election. And I, as a supporter of the [REDACTED] candidate was labelled her "kapo", a derogatory term (see two interpretations below):

The term kapo originally referred to Jewish inmates at Nazi concentration camps who were assigned to assist the Nazis in overseeing the other inmates... Kapos are also commonly considered traitors to the Jewish people... It is one of the harshest insults a Jew can use against another Jew, an accusation of betrayal of self and people. (<https://forward.com/culture/649287/kapo-holocaust-insult-online-politics/>)

Using this terminology against Jewish people today borders on antisemitic. If non-Jews described a Jew as a 'kapo' it is highly likely it would be interpreted as antisemitic. (<https://hmd.org.uk/news/response-to-the-use-of-the-term-kapo-by-rabbi-schochet/>)

I was shaken by the levels of vehemence, hatred, stereotyping, sexism, and ageism expressed by this FB commenter, who apparently disregarded any potential harm such words might have on people at the receiving end. The [REDACTED] appears not to have moderated his personal FB page to prevent such disgusting comments from his supporters.

The [REDACTED] for Goldstein and the [REDACTED] party leadership should hang their heads in shame for not deterring their supporters from the abhorrent words and behaviour directed towards the [REDACTED] candidate and her supporters before, during, and after the 2025 election campaign in Goldstein. Where is common decency and the moral compass?

Suggestions for change

1. Political advertising.

- a. All political advertising (leaflets, billboards, corflutes, etc) must be authorised, that is, advertising from political parties and from third-party proxy groups/organisations/corporations etc.
- b. As is the case for consumer advertising, truth should be mandated in political advertising, and those authorising the political advertisements must be held to account.

2. Postal vote applications, and hospital/aged care voting.

- a. Only the AEC should deal with postal vote applications. The potential for voter manipulation by allowing political parties (or others) to be involved in disseminating applications is undemocratic. This practice must cease.
- b. Only AEC workers should conduct polling in hospitals and aged care facilities, and only AEC workers should assist patients/residents to vote.

3. Pre-poll, polling day, and polling station matters.

- a. Third-party proxy groups supporting any candidate should be banned from polling stations.
- b. There should be a limit on the extent of signage allowed for any one candidate.
- c. There should be a limit on the number of volunteers handing out "How to vote cards" for each candidate. The volunteers should be identifiable as "official volunteers" by voters and AEC workers.
- d. Police should be present at polling stations to maintain control over the behaviour of candidate volunteers and voters.

4. Political commentary

- a. While I am a supporter of free speech, I believe that *hate speech* legislation should be applicable when individuals (or groups) are targeted and vilified in political commentary in the media, in advertising, in printed materials, and in comments posted online on social media platforms.