

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
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P. Syphers

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Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA. 2600.

### VOTING 2007 FEDERAL ELECTION

I have been involved in politics for more than 30 years and for most of that time have scrutineered at Retirement Villages and hospitals for pre poll voting and I am very concerned and upset with the way this was conducted at the recent election.

For many years Independent Living residents in retirement villages have had roving pre polling at venues within the villages to conduct voting for those residents, this year only residents of hostel accommodation and nursing homes were able to cast their votes in the villages. All other residents had to either attend designated public polling booths or apply for postal votes. I am now a resident in a retirement village and I was able to witness first hand the anger and the upset and the frustration of many of the residents. There over 100 ILU residents in this village, many have no transport while many have trouble moving about. Postal votes were not the answer as almost none of them had any How to Vote material and became hopelessly confused, added to the problem was the fact that some of the material received from the Electoral Commission had only one ballot paper enclosed, the Senate papers were missing. I received a number of calls from distressed seniors who were unsure how to cast their votes.

Not being allowed to hand out How to Vote material during the pre polling period was unfair and upsetting for these people and particularly those in nursing homes and hospitals, their first sighting of any voting material was the Ballot paper and I saw many confused and upset faces during my days accompanying the teams, some of the returning officers do an excellent job showing H.T.V. material but elderly and ill people need time to consider what they want to do before they have to actually cast their vote. The I.L.U. people, in particular, need to have access to the material before they attend the booth to study what the parties are advising.

At one of the hospitals the returning officers had no H.T.V. information for the neighbouring electorate of Fisher and so they borrowed my copy of this information for those patients who resided in that electorate

Most institutions do not distribute material left with them, indeed, generally it was handed back to scrutineers on the day voting was taking place.

The fact that scrutineers were unable to hand out H.T.V. cards to voters prior to their entry to the polling area left many people confused as this is what they have been accustomed to previously

and they rely on being able to study voting patterns before they cast their vote. Time constraints in the actual polling booth leave them confused and later worried about what they have done.

The ruling against handing out H.T.V. information during the pre poll period discriminates against the elderly and the ill in our community and in the interest of fairness to all voters it should revert back to the previous practise of having material available to everyone..

On election day there were many problems in Nambour which is in the Fairfax electorate. A number of polling places were changed from the normal places and no signs were placed to direct people to these changes, polling places were not advertised in the community newspapers and only once in the local daily in a very narrow column with very small print. I worked most of the polling day on one of the normal booths and we were confronted many times during the day by angry people who hadn't been able to find out where the booths were. There were also many complaints about the length of queues at most booths and it was strongly felt that not enough officers were on duty in the booths to keep people flowing through.

I believe that the elderly and ill were discriminated against during the election and strongly request that this matter be looked at and rectified before the next election so that all voters have reasonable access to polling venues and H.T.V. information.



Peggy Syphers