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To:

The Secretary,

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

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	140
Date Received	9/7/02
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

I request that the following comments be considered by the Joint Standing Committee.

BOOTHES. That on election day, the voting booths be widely and clearly advertised locally as in some instances, the actual location of the booth was changed and voters arrived to be at a loss if there was no notice to redirect them.

PARTY NAME. That confusion does not occur when a candidate standing for a political party has a similar name e.g. in the recent Senate election Liberal for forests. This was mistaken for a vote for the Liberal Party.

PRE POLLING. That pre polling opportunities be more widely advertised and more booths be available.

SCRUTINEERS. That they also be supervised while they supervise the vote counters. There could be an opportunity for fraud at this stage of voting counting. Incorrectly marked ballot papers, squiggles and blotches all need to be shown without fail to the Booth Officer in charge.

VOTING PREFERENCES. This is the most controversial section of the whole system. If there are 12 candidates for example and the voter only wants to vote for one candidate and none of the others, it should be the voters choice to place a 1 only in that box and leave the others blank but this should not be an informal vote as it is at the present. Some time ago it was a formal vote to write 1, 2,2,2 etc but the voting system was changed so that all boxes had to have a number or it was informal and this can be considered undemocratic because a voter is forced to give preferences to candidates when the voter does not want to do so which is the only method the voter has to refuse to comply and so express their opinion but this records an informal vote. The other alternative is to turn up at the booth, record your presence and place a blank ballot paper in the box and not vote at all. And this does happen.

Enclosed is a letter to the Editor of the Geelong Advertiser which was written 12 months ago but illustrates the confusion which our voting system has perpetrated. A return to actually voting for whom you wish to vote and no other would be a most welcome development.

GEE LONG ELECTORAL OFFICE. Information from the Geelong Electoral Office spokesperson when queried on the subject of informing voters of their rights and duties, expressed the opinion that whilst they use newspapers and television to educate the public, had they extra funding, a personal letter drop would be the most effective means by which they could get their message across.

Ruth E. Gibbs