

10th August 2019

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Submission to Inquiry into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2019 Federal Election and matters related thereto - GetUp Presence at Voting Centre

At the last Federal Election two GetUp representatives (wearing GetUp t-shirts) were handing out voting guidance leaflets at the Avoca Beach Public School Polling Place at 83-95, The Round Drive, Avoca Beach NSW.

One of the GetUp representatives was approximately 80 metres from the polling booth on a footpath beside the road leading to the School. The other GetUp representative was standing closely with political party representatives at the front gate to the School who were handing out 'how-to-vote' leaflets.

I was offered a leaflet by the GetUp representative who advised me that GetUp "was not a political organisation". This is untrue, and if they were not a political organisation, what were they doing there!

I am strongly against any organisation or individual that is not a registered political party handing out voting guidance leaflets at polling places. If GetUp can do this, what is to stop many other organisations (e.g. churches, trade unions, environmental groups, charities, 'think tanks', pressure groups or others from a range of political interests) doing the same, turning the entry to polling places into a crowd scene.

My view is that only registered political parties, who have candidates standing for the particular electorate, should be allowed to hand out voting information at the polling place. All other organisations can stay at least 300 metres or more away. These other organisations can exercise their freedom of speech in many other ways (e.g. advertisements, social media, news media); and I don't want them disturbing my right to vote unmolested.

There is a potential for citizens being mobbed by crowds when they wish to peacefully fulfil their democratic rights to vote. Let's not deter people from attending polling places and let us keep our voting experience a calm exercise of our precious freedoms.

Peter Bayley