

1 July 2015

The Hon Tony Smith MP
Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
(by email)

Dear Mr Smith

Re: JSCEM Inquiry into campaigning at polling places

This submission specifically addresses matters relating to the practices of campaigning at polling places and provides recommendations, which may make the following issues less prominent at future elections.

Following the 2013 election, there have been widespread allegations within the media of bullying and intimidation of candidates and voters at polling places and misleading conduct designed to distort and deceive voters. In recent times, there has also been an increasing prevalence at elections of material being distributed at polling places by third party groups who are not contesting the election, which I have seen most recently at the 2015 NSW State Election. This can create confusion for voters, especially when it is not clear who is behind the distribution and printing of such material.

I therefore propose to the committee, that it amends the rules and practices in relation to campaigning at polling places to:

- I. Limit political matter allowable within the fenceline of a polling booth to how-to-vote cards only.
- II. Restrict political party representatives from entering beyond the fenceline of the polling place, thus restricting them to the nature strip only.
- III. Ensure the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) staff present at the polling place maintain a list of persons distributing political matter and what political party they represent.

- IV. Ensure that AEC staff present at the polling place consistently monitor the activity of political party representatives to reduce the likelihood of bullying or intimidation.
- V. Guarantee that third party groups not contesting the election or not registered with the AEC are not distributing material that could confuse voters.

I ask the Joint Standing Committee to take my recommendations into consideration in their review of the rules and practices relating to campaigning at polling places.

Yours sincerely,

Dane Bracewell