

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS***Chair: Tony Smith MP**Deputy Chair: Michael Danby MP*Inquiry into the conduct of the 2004 federal election

Inquiry to probe conduct of federal election campaign

An inquiry into the conduct of the 2004 federal election continues this week with public hearings in Brisbane and Tweed Heads on 6 and 7 July.

Federal parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has a brief to examine the conduct of the 2004 federal election and any other matters related to Australia's electoral law.

Already the committee, which comprises members of the Government, Opposition and the Australian Democrats, has held hearings in regional Queensland to gather evidence of the major problems with postal voting that occurred in that area.

The committee will continue its hearings program throughout July and August, starting in Brisbane (6 July) and Tweed Heads (7 July) before heading to Melbourne (25 July) and Adelaide (26 July), and Perth, Canberra and Sydney in August.

In Brisbane, the committee will hear from several people who have made submissions to the inquiry, before heading to Tweed Heads, far north NSW, to examine the election campaign in the electorate of Richmond.

Richmond was the fourth-closest election result in the country, with Labor's Justine Elliot winning the seat from incumbent Larry Anthony (The Nationals) by 301 votes. The committee will explore some of the issues that submissions to its inquiry have raised about the election in Richmond, including party how-to-vote cards and the high rate of provisional voting.

The committee, which comprises members of the Government, Opposition and the Australian Democrats, is eager to hear first-hand about the concerns that voters have about the election. Committee chair Tony Smith said it was appropriate for the committee to go to areas where there had been problems during the election to hear for itself the difficulties that voters had encountered.

"Australia has one of the best electoral systems in the world, but that does not mean it can't be improved or there are faults that can't be rectified," he said. "We want to hear from people about what they like about our electoral system, what they don't like, and what they think could be done better at the next election."

Details of the Brisbane and Tweed Heads hearings are as follows:**Brisbane, 6 July, 9.30am–3.30pm, Queensland Parliament House, function room B****Tweed Heads, 7 July, 9.30am–1pm, Anzac Room, Twin Town Services Club, Wharf Street**

The electoral matters committee is a joint committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and comprises Mr Smith (chair), Mr Michael Danby (deputy chair), Senator George Brandis, Senator Kim Carr, Senator Michael Forshaw, Senator Brett Mason, Senator Andrew Murray, Mr Steven Ciobo, Mr Daryl Melham, and Ms Sophie Panopoulos.

Details about the inquiry and the committee's hearing program are available from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/elect04.

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