

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra.
Dear Secretary:

This submission is in relation to your current enquiry into '*the conduct of the 2010 Federal election and matters relating thereto*'.

One very important issue exposed in the last stages of the campaign by the *Rowe* case concerns the impact on citizens of the current administrative provision surrounding enrolment. As currently administered, these provisions exclude an extraordinarily large number of potential voters – rough estimates suggest this could be between 7 and 10 per cent of the total of eligible citizens. This is a serious failure of democratic engagement and I urge the committee to advocate proposals that would redress this outcome.

Various states already have provisions for enrolment that extends up to the polls. At the least, it should be possible to set a date for closure of the rolls very close to polling day itself. Indeed, after the NSW poll the Committee might wish examine the practical experience that is available from that state with its same-day enrolment provisions. But ideally, we should be moving to a national system of automated enrolment. NSW and Victoria have both introduced automated enrolment and their schemes could provide a pattern for an analogous national approach.

Another important issue concerns the requirements in Section 101. These should be amended to simply establish that a person living at an address in a Subdivision should be entitled to vote in it.

There are various other ancillary and associate changes which are required. However, the above are the critical changes that are required for removing the most egregious present anomalies in enrolment provisions. Such changes would ensure, as far as possible, that all Australian citizens enjoy the right to vote, which is their basic and fundamental entitlement.

I would be happy to elaborate on these propositions if that would be of interest to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

(Professor) Ian Marsh
24th February, 2011.